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INDEPENDENCE

FROM THE YORUBA BY ADEBAYO FALETI

There is nothing as sweet as independence.
It is a great day on which the slave buys his freedom.
When a slave can go to fetch water
And nobody can tell him: you are coming late!
When a slave will fetch firewood
And use it to cook his *own* food!
When a slave can bring home a couple of yams
Every day, to use for his meal.
When the slave does not serve anybody,
When he is merely serving himself!
What a day, when the slave wakes up to rest —
Not to go to another man's farm!
When the slave starts planting his own farm.
Four hundred and twenty rows of yam!
When he will plant the maize and dig the yam.
When he will sell his crop and use it for his own family.
No longer will he do unpaid work.
No longer waste his old age serving others.
The slave will rejoice, rejoice, rejoice.
He will jump up into the air and slap his body with his arms.
He will sing the song and say:
"Help me to be thankful I am lucky!"
Let us rejoice with the slave.
The one whose life has never been pawned
Does not know the hardship of work before dawn.
A person who has never been a slave
Does not know the hardship of the stable boy.
He will never know what it means
To brush the dew off the leaves in the morning
And stay on the farm until after dark — slicing yams.
In the dry season or in the rainy season —
There is no escape from it,
The eyes of the slave have seen many things

If a man's life is pawned
And he is as tall as the Ogun tree in the king's market,
He is as small as a dwarf terrier in the eyes of his master.
And if the master is burnt out like an old stick,
And if he is mangy like a scruffy old dog,
He will still be acting like the master.
The eyes of the slave have seen *everything!*
No day is like the day when the elephant served under the duiker.
Duiker sent elephant to the river,
But elephant did not return in time.
Duiker beat elephant until he was unable to shit!
Duiker beat elephant until he was unable to piss!
Duiker abused elephant on the bridge.
He reminded elephant that he was rich enough to own him.
But the elephant accepted the punishment with love.
He said: it is not because I am stupid,
Or because I have not grown up.
If the slave moves carefully,
He may still buy his freedom after a long, long time.
It was not too late for the elephant
To buy himself free and become the head of the animals.
Let us learn wisdom from the elephant.
Let us shake off our suffering with patience.
Gently we kill the fly on our own body.
Let all of us get ready to buy ourselves back!
After all: we have land, and we have hoes.
We have cocoa trees and we have bananas.
We have palm kernels and we have groundnuts.
Let us fight, so that we may cultivate our own farm.
To escape from being slaves and pawns.
Let all our people be free.

translated by Bakare Gbadamosi and Ulli Beier.

The Crooks

BY GABRIEL OKARA

Their hair was all brown with dust. The clothes they had on were dirty and torn. Their bare feet were as dirty and as brown as their hair. The only luggage they had was a bulging haversack. It was neatly buckled down, and one of them carried it on his shoulder, as they walked along the bridge towards Idumota. They were two men who had apparently just arrived from the Provinces by lorry.

Traders arriving dirty and dusty from head to foot, and carrying haversacks is a familiar sight in Lagos. But these two had an air about them of being in a strange place. They walked one behind the other as if they were picking their way in the forest. They avoided bodily contact with the people walking briskly to and fro past them, and were startled over and over again by the strident horns of the cars. They gaped at the lagoon and at the stream of cars, motorcycles and bicycles rushing in both directions across the gigantic bridge.

On the other side, a man was cycling leisurely along on a brand new green bicycle from the Idumota end of the bridge. His shirt and trousers were a dazzling white, and his two-tone black and white shoes were spotless. Tilted over his forehead was a white cork helmet. He put on his brakes as his practised eyes caught the two men on the other side, stopping now and again to allow people to pass, or looking for an opening through the milling throng on the pavement. The man on the bicycle studied them for a few minutes from his side of the bridge and waited for a break in the traffic. His eyes never left them. An old car wheezed past. He looked quickly left and right. Another car was approaching, but he dashed across narrowly missing death. Safe on the other side, he cycled up to the two men.

"Hallo", he said with a broad smile.

The two men were startled and moved on faster. But the cyclist stuck to them.

"I know you for somewhere", he said smiling. "I tink na Enugu. I get friend dere and you resemble'am".

The man carrying the haversack moved to the railings and his partner turning to the cyclist, said. "Yes na from Enugu we come. You go for Enugu before?"

"Yes", the cyclist said, "I stay for Enugu long time. Okonkwo be my big friend an' you resembl'am for face. You be him broder?"

"Yes," said the stranger, "one Okonkwo be one farder one moder with me. He be big contractor for Enugu an' we stay for Asata. Na him be your frein'?

"Ah! na him", said the cyclist, "we be big frien's. All the lorry wey he get na me arrange for'am. I be agent for lorry. Dis na firs' time you come for Lagos?"

"Yes, dis na firs' time an' na lorry I wan' buy sef."

"Ah you be lucky man", said the cyclist, "Waiten be your name?"

"Okonkwo."

"An' your friend?"

"Okeke."

"You be lucky man. Na lorry I go give person for Ebute Metta jus' now. Na God say make you meet me. Wayo plenty for here. They for wayo you an' take your money for nothin. How many lorry you wan' buy?"

"No only one", said Okonkwo.

"Na only one you want. I go fit arrange am quick for you if na today or tomorrow. Only today late small. But tomorrow I go fit getam for you easy .... You get place for stay?"

"The person wey I know, I no know the place he stay. But we go look for am", said Okonkwo.

"Make you no worry", said the cyclist, "you stay for my place. Your broder be my big frien' and he go vex when he hear say I see you an' no keep you for my house. Come we go".

At this invitation, Okonkwo shook his head and said, "I fear for dis town. They tell me say wayo plenty. I no know you. You say you be my broder frien' but I dey fear."

"You right", said the cyclist, "you right for fear. But your broder an' me be big frien's an even e write me letter say him broder dey come. I forget for tell you de firs' time I see you. So make you no fear. Na God make wey I see you."

"I dey fear O," said Okonkwo, "I dey fear but make I tell Okeke firs'."

With this he went over to Okeke and told him. But Okeke replied with a vigorous shake of his head and said loudly that it was all a trick to get their money. But after much persuation he reluctantly agreed and they went with the cyclist.

It was evening. Okonkwo and Okeke had eaten a well pounded foofoo and egusi soup specially prepared for them and were sitting close together with the haversack between them in their host's parlour. The latter who had been out for some little time had just come in with a party of other people. The new comers were dressed in heavily embroidered velvet agbadas and slippers.

"Dis na my frien's", their host said, introducing the people to Okonkwo and Okeke. "I tell dem say I get big 'tranger so they come salute you. All be big people. Na we dey sell motor for dis town."

As the men went forward to shake hands with them, Okonkwo and Okeke looked awed and fidgeted. The hand shaking over, their host beckoned one of his friends into his bedroom.

"You see how them be?" he said after shutting the door. "They be moo-moo and they get plenty money for bag. Now listen, as I say before we go

play big. We go make them win hundred 'redboys'. When you wan' kill big fish you use big hook and big bait. So you know waiten you go do. Tomorrow we go rich." "Then he opened a small wooden box and bringing out three cards said, "dis na the cards" as he handed them over to his partner who took them and put them in his pocket. Then the two men went back into the parlour to join the others. Soon drinks were produced from their baglike pockets and as they drank and boasted of their riches the cards were brought out. They invited Okonkwo and Okeke to play, but they refused as they didn't know how.

"Very easy", said the man with the cards, "When I cutam putam for ground you pick dis one" showing them an ace of spades as he continued, "you pick dis one you win, you pick another I win, easy you see."

Still Okonkwo and Okeke were reluctant, but they soon seemed to be impressed by the easy way some of the people won money, and joined the game.

"Na one one poun", said the man with the cards. "Put your money for ground. You take dis you win, you take dis you lose". Okonkwo and Okeke watched carefully as the man cut the cards and put them face downwards on the floor. After studying them for a minute or two Okonkwo picked one card. It was the ace of spades, and so he won. So it went on until Okonkwo and Okeke won one hundred pounds between them.

"E do now", said the host as the hundredth pound was being handed over to Okonkwo and Okeke. "E do now. You be lucky people. Tomorrow you go get lorry."

So they stopped playing and the people left. The host also went to bed after showing Okonkwo and Okeke a place to sleep in the parlour.

When he thought that Okonkwo and Okeke would be asleep, their host opened the door quietly and peered in. The haversack was chained to a chair. He shut the door. But soon he was back again unable to resist the anticipation of the money he would trick them out of the next day. Okonkwo and Okeke snored. They were the greenest things he'd ever come across, he thought. He already felt the seven hundred and fifty pounds in the haversack in his palms. Tomorrow, tomorrow, he thought and shutting the door gently, went to bed a rich man . . . But when he went to greet his guests in the morning, the room was empty!

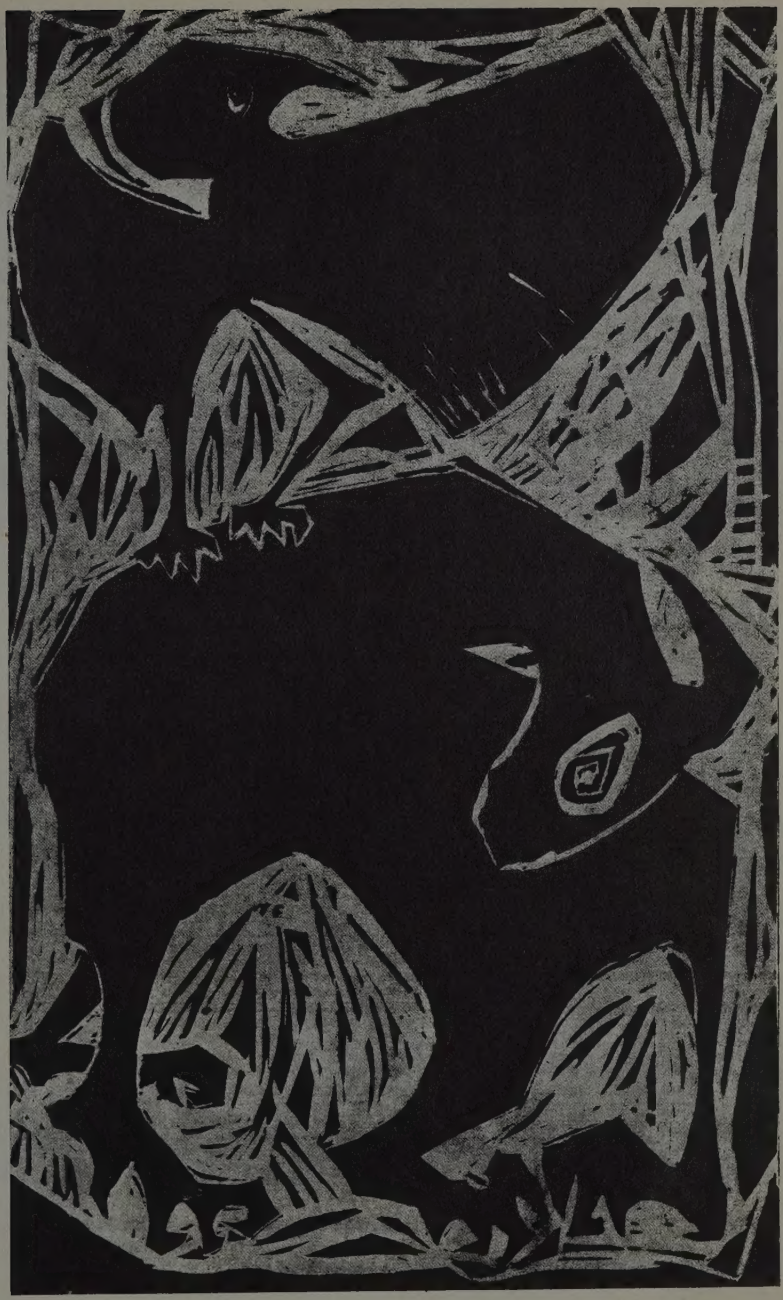
In the lavatory of the 'Up Limited' train, Okonkwo and Okeke were grooming themselves.

"Free food, free lodging, and a gift of a hundred pounds!" Okonkwo was saying as he washed his face.

"When he was peeping in again and again, I thought he was going to be tough", said Okeke, as he rubbed his chin before the mirror.

"They'll never learn", said Okonkwo as he wiped his face. They are green as green peas, the whole batch of them. See how they left the door only bolted."

So they bantered on as the train jugged along. Swaying on the handle of the door was their haversack now emptied of the stones and old rags that had won them the hundred pounds.



DEMAS NWOKO

A YOUNG NIGERIAN ARTIST

BY ULLI BEIER

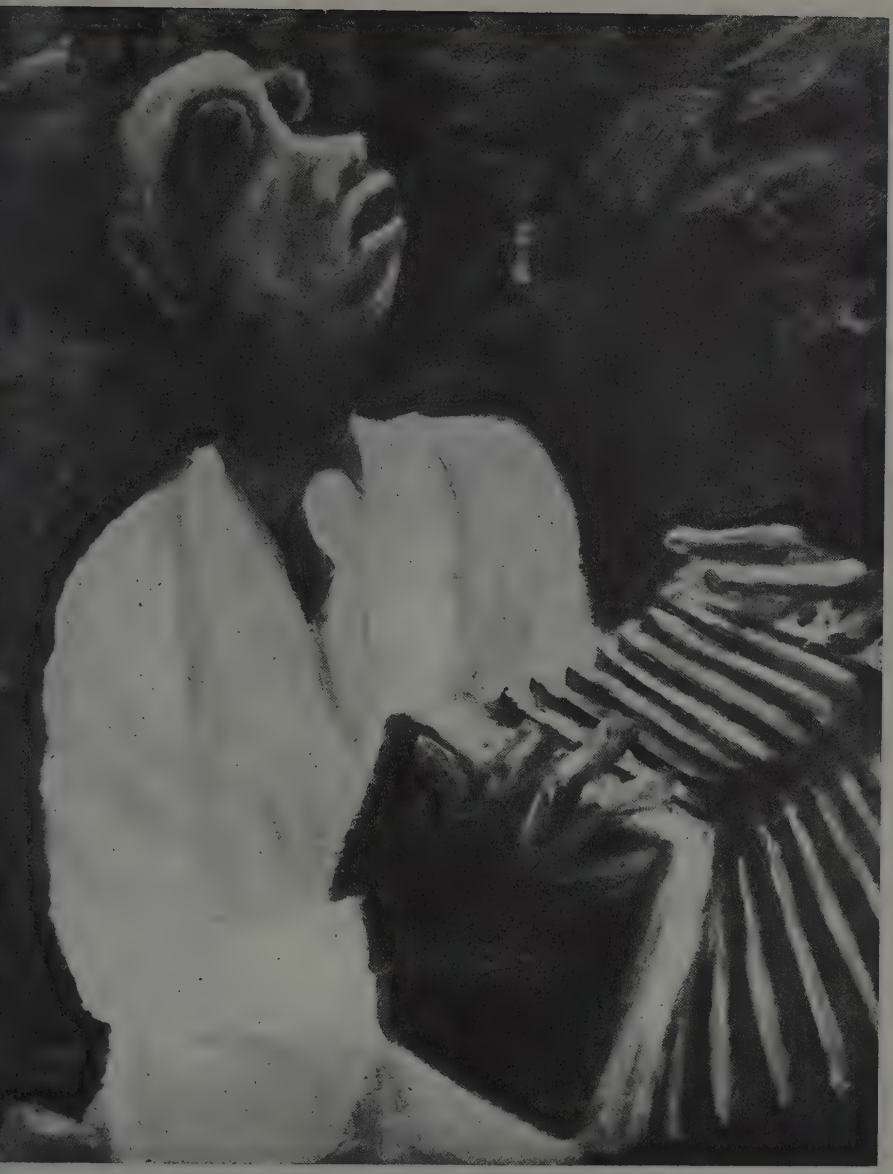
The affinities between modern European art and traditional African wood-carving have often enough been pointed out. Certain formal similarities between artists like Kirchner or Epstein and African art are more than mere borrowings or derivations, they arise from an affinity of spirit.

One should have thought therefore, that the young generation of sophisticated Nigerian artists would move painlessly and smoothly from the traditional crafts of their fathers into the worldwide artistic movements of the twentieth century. But this has not been so. Unfortunately the most powerful impact of European culture took place in the 19th century, a period when Europe was so selfsatisfied and contented in its own respectability and achievement that few white men could conceive a cultural *exchange* with Africa. Contact with Africans was then invariably conceived as "lifting up" the poor primitive brother to one's own level of culture—or nearly to one's own level. In the artistic field this was disastrous. Artistic expression had degenerated into a kind of sentimental story telling in Victorian Europe. Painstaking attention to realistic detail had come to replace the artist's free play with forms. To the nineteenth century European the sensitive, delicate African carvings appeared crude and clumsy and they were rejected outright not only for aesthetic, but also for religious reasons.

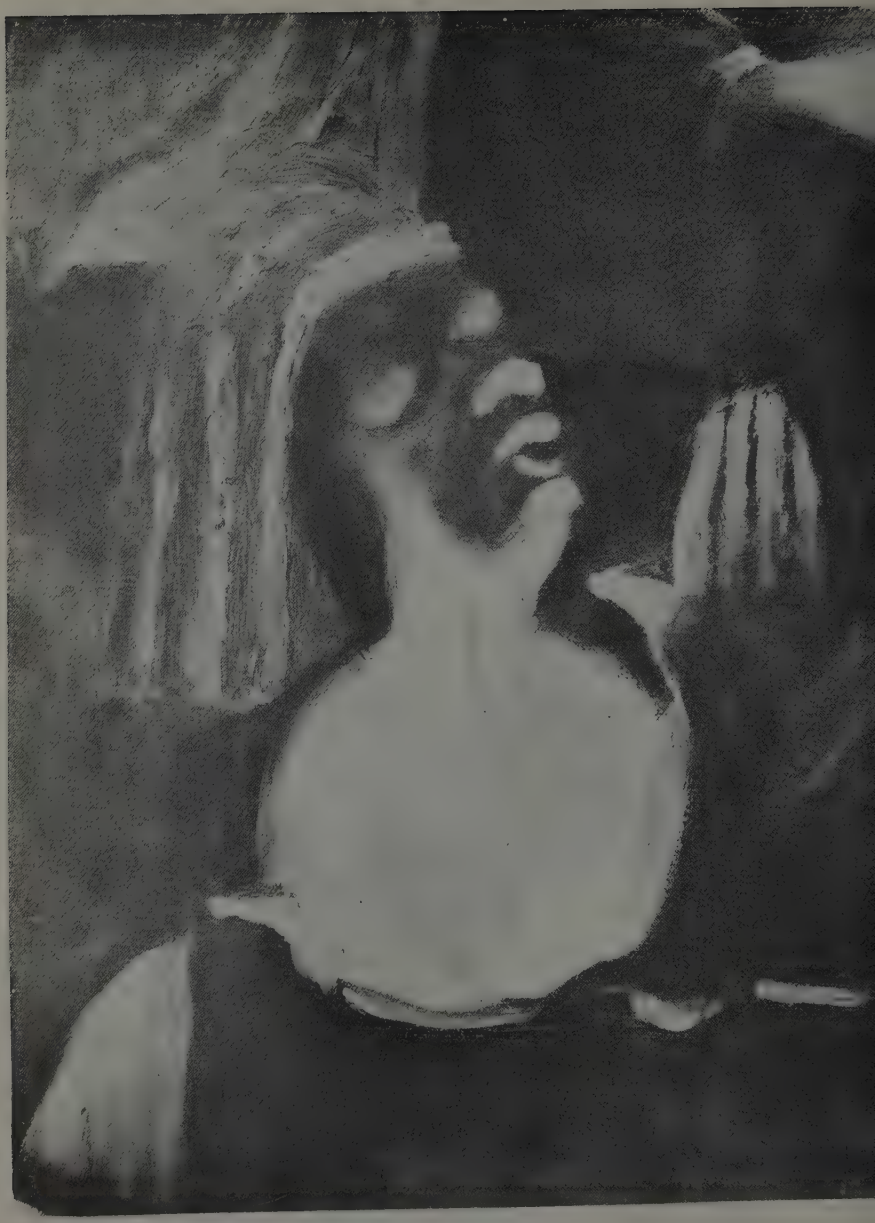
Since those days we have completely changed our attitude to African art. Jacob Epstein, the English sculptor, to quote but one famous example has said that African sculpture "is supposed to be rude, savage, the product of uncultured, uncivilized people. I find on the contrary, restraint in craftsmanship, delicacy, and sensitiveness, a regard for the material, and none of the stupid vulgarity, pomposity and crudeness, so evident in (European) sculpture today."

In a sense this new enlightenment has come too late. The present generation of Nigerian artists have gone to schools where they were taught to despise their traditions and where the only European art they were brought into contact with was nineteenth century.

As a result we have many young Nigerian painters who painstakingly copy nature, whose only worry is *perspective and proportion*, by which latter word is meant, of course, merely anatomic correctness!



ing a living (detail)



2 (left) praying woman (detail)
3 (right) Churchgoers (detail)

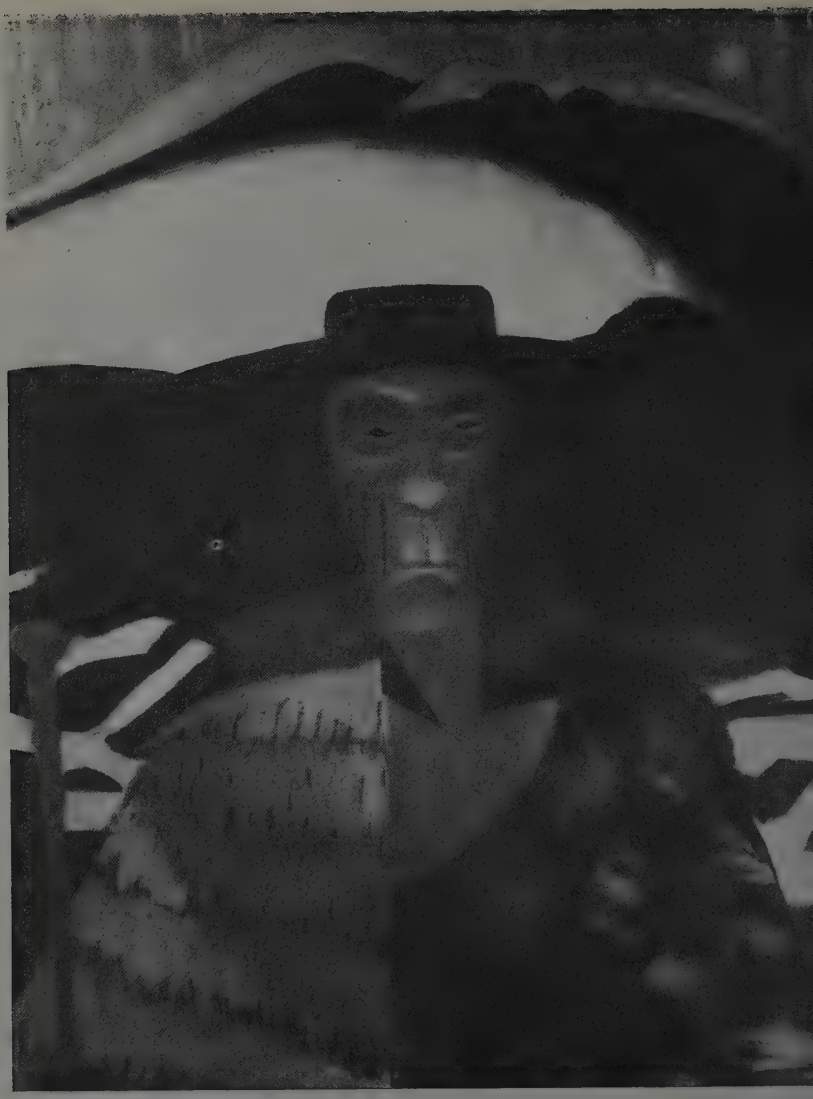


Plate 4 (top) Ogboni Chief in Abeokuta
Plate 5 (right) Detail of plate 6

Plate #. "In 1959"

te 7 Detail of Plate 6

Plate 8 Detail of Plate 6

There is a vague feeling that a Nigerian artist ought somehow to show that he is a *Nigerian* and not just a copyist of European art. But this is often shown merely in the subject matter not in form or feeling. Palm trees on the lagoon, village scenes, women carrying pots, maskeraders — such folkloristic subjects are to identify the artist as *Nigerian*. But a theme in itself is of little significance in art. It is the approach to the theme that matters.

Young artists have been further tempted to produce such exotic genre pictures by the fact that this is the kind of thing the new Nigerian middle class likes to buy. Like all *bourgoisies* in the whole world, they are less concerned with the spiritual problems of the artist than with the empty space above the sideboard in the parlour which they want to fill.

In such a general situation one cannot but admire those few young artists who have not succumbed to these trends, but go their own way with independent determination. Among these, Demas Nwoko is outstanding. Nwoko is still a very young man — he is in fact still a student during his last year at college — but already he has developed a highly original and distinctive style. His themes are simple enough: a woman praying, an Ogboni chief, churchgoers, a man playing the accordion, a beggar etc. But there is more than the representation of people or objects. We are immediately aware of ideas and mysterious presences behind the scene. One is strongly conscious of the distinctive and individual personality of the artist. I was not surprised when Demas Nwoko told me that he carried a subject in his head for weeks and sometimes months before starting to paint it. There is a great intensity of feeling in these pictures. And while in his earlier work his forms lacked definition, and one felt the struggle of the artist to subject his medium to his particular ends, his two last paintings (the Ogboni chief and the group of soldiers) show a new clarity and mastery of technique. In these two works his forms have the clear cut angular precision of Ibo masks and they manage to convey a similar feeling of tension. The picture of three European officers seated in front of African soldiers is of almost unbearable intensity. Although the figures are in perfect repose one feels that they must explode any minute into violent action. In the portrait of the Ogboni chief from Abeokuta Demas Nwoko has been able to express the powerful concentration and superb dignity that we have come to admire in the older generation of Nigerians. This picture is perhaps a clue to Nwoko's relation to African tradition. Unlike lesser artists he refuses to simply borrow the *forms* of traditional masks and carvings. But he admires the balanced personalities, the intensive life of his forefathers and their great gift to read the meaning behind appearances. In the sense that he possesses and cultivates some of these qualities himself, Demas Nwoko can be said to continue an African tradition.

CLARENCE MAJOR

A STATEMENT

The whole day's end in this huge nasty city is turning purple charged with zinc white, and though I may feel ten thousand layers of pain, here, though I may travel a million miles away, I do not believe I will ever be free of my bitterness and tragic love for this crude beast of iron and stone, though she has wounded me deep, and the sore is red and bloody; perhaps because I am still so young a man.

I could not write, nor speak of good and evil. Once, I thought I might have made a sharp acid line between the two. But not now. For I have known both, and believe I shall continue to know both, within myself, for the rest of my life; therefore, I find myself struggling never to judge anyone in terms of those two lost angles of this world. I have known all there is to know, I hazard, in this city. I have married and brought children (indirectly) into this cold climate. I have held my nose to a grinding stone for a number of years, and I have served in the Armed Forces, without belief. Indeed, I have one dislocated dark soul, wandering through this vast inscrutable jungle; have slept with whores, and walked with homosexuals, have dined with the rich, and known the criminals. But I have been cautious. Perhaps being cautious has been my down-fall. I cannot say. If I could speak of the churches I have known, their good, and say of them something to affirm, perhaps I would be, today, a different person. Churches I have known. I think about them: all of them, from shacks in the south where tragic and desperate Negroes screamed, to temples erected by strange people from strange and faraway lands. These were once symbols of good. For me, at least. But they are, I must confess, no more symbols of good than all the bars and dance halls, houses of whoredom and educational fallacies, I have known, and now remember with but something close to indifference. And indifference, itself, is dangerous; I so well know that, and for my knowing, I can also understand my own fear of it. But I find no evil anywhere either, and this too carries, for me, fear. I may find evil lurking, possible evil to my body, but that is not exactly the kind of evil we have been taught to believe in, disrespect and cast out. I am a dangerous person, I know, even though I am passive by nature, because I cannot find it in myself, to separate what is good and what is evil. This is the plight of my generation, I believe.

The night has fallen. The spell of the night is well on its way into the marrow of my bones. I have been out walking today, in the rain. I got soaked. I thought a great deal. What I thought about, I cannot remember, but I remember I felt vaguely contented in my mental wandering. This night is cold in its bare appearance, but actually it is very warm. The sky, beyond this window, is black blue. The few scattered, naked but shameless almost ugly trees man planted, strike bitterly against the night's blues, and the glass, through which I see, is splashed with rain drops. The glass is cracked at the corner. The window ceil is of a type of wood which is rottening day by day, drenched, as it be. This room itself, a kitchen, is rather depressing. I examine my mental climate. I find myself out walking the streets, smoking too many cigarettes, walking the desperate nasty city's heart-broken and busted sidewalks. But nothing—absolutely nothing around me but cars, cars, cars, iron, steel, garments, and false, half-alive people. The only connection we have with reality is that we breathe, and perhaps a few of us see. So I drink, but it is no good. Nothing seems to help.

Why not pull up my roots? Why not start anew? The question is easy enough, but I must confess, I am not a very powerful man in terms of living. I once suspected I might reach that point. But not yet. I feel too strongly, much too strongly for others especially those who are, according to nature, my children. The sons God gave me. So that I find myself twisted at the core, dislocated and yet buried in the cement of a dangerous plight. Why dangerous? Because I am faced with the possibility of being destroyed because I can never become stagnant.

So, one must give up something, kill something, in order to achieve another thing. But is the grass actually greener, on the other side of this disaster? Is it better to live with what we have, than to venture to what we know not of? Perhaps. Perhaps. But I am young. And a young man cannot be told anything for his own good. I know that.

Of course, it may be, because I am not rooted deeply into anything old enough to give me a sense of intellectual security, I am so troubled. But then, it may be, too, that this grumbling is the result of my creative urge to strike and grasp it's hold, to send itself home. It is not home yet, but it is on its way.

CELEBRATED RETURN

1. a circus of battleships carring heavy laughter passes beneath a bridge which may be lifted and each has been assigned a draft and thus lifted but those laughing were ficticus representatives of the human race no matter how more harmonious they were they had just left the land where dromedaries are plenty and men go in droll groups in robes with beards but their laughter was an excavated kind of shelter from the dubious plight of anger.

2. ashore gawky measures of folk of the nature of insubstantiality waited in dull booming upon the science of the earth for the circus of mirth which now pushed the waves forward as the battleships of embellishment encircled the geometry of the solid sunstruck people shouting now at last.
   Gloria in Excelsis
   Gloria in Excelsis
   Gloria in Excelsis
      Gloria Patri
      Gloria Patri
      Gloria Patri

UNEXPECTED LOVE

unexpected assistance
like a female sponsor at the baptism of my salvation,
shines like lustrous —
precious yellow metallic elements, not yet even concieved!
A goodly Supreme Deity, perhaps?
NO? Now whose hands, heart, and heavy love--so tender
      rendered this unexpected assistance of love?
It does actually shine, like I tell luck
shines like a metallic element, lustrous--
yet
I am a new man, new am I but deeper in darkness,
but I am still intramural. The walls of this city,
      my soul,
are still closed, clock says, stalling for heaven.

TEN POEMS

BY PAUL VESEY

THE SENSE OF THE THING

The sense was that no sense
In the twisted tale of nonsense
Has constructed this disaster.
The bearded image down
The blood strewn there
Around the still fitful beating body
To the startled gaze of the dear friends and the neighbours.

For he is dead, the host is dead
The paraphernalia of a journey
    cast back upon the water.
The eyes peering lack
The mind reaching back
    summoning again
The furious light
And his clarion desire.

Who peered into the abyss and heard the wailing ascension
    through each crevice
Of the crackpots of desire.

The anguish rose at the fifth hour
And at the sixth was with him
Before the last descended
    and the silence.
And with a tearing, without a tear
Death so sturdy was caught up there
Death was caught up
To die.

To lie down, death
    in the junk pile of history
For once upon a time.

THE OLD OLD FAKIR

I once would loiter on the Spring's sweet corner
Where the berries ripen and the birch's daughters
Swing fast and pivot
Riot red and yellow
For her magic palette.

But now I know Spring's madness
I can insulate its folly
Cage its bright temptation,
For I know now that Spring is lying
Each green leaf a gross distortion
Blue skies white clouds all are common
And the sun that old old fakir.

I know now that Spring is lying
Young I was and innocent
Til Winter came
and wised me up.

I'VE HEARD OF A CITY

On the last sloping path
In hushed and fading sun
I shall at last come home
The last course run.

From ways I did not know
From alien rock and clay
At the last turning there
My steps shall know the way.

Glimpsed from a far off place
Across an unknown range
My feet shall find a near approach
That is not strange.

On the last sloping path
On arrows of the sun
I shall one day come home again
And all is done.

IN THE FELL PIT OF OLIGARCHY

In the fell pit of oligarchy
Encumbered yet with the weight of fear
Torn under the heel of a false doctrine
Divided by a falsely speaking seer,
We are halted at this juncture
    and consider in which direction
Yet not to aspire.
We are weary with illusions and the years that drag
The haste to be about another's business
Unfurl an ever alien flag.
My soul is listening for the clear song
    of your sweet voice
O pure matchless one,
Who will sing an old song
And tell in a far country
    of the foothills of an unremembered home.
They say we have forgotten
That we parted and forever at the shore
In the shadow of the ships attending,
Flickering still the flame and death, the branding.
Amid the cries of terror which long years ago they bore,
That you are any curious climate
A place we're called upon to study
To be literate—
Lift an horizon—
That — and nothing more,
Along with Peiping, Ankor, strange Tibet
And add, yes, Singapore.
Only that, and nothing more.
A curious spot pinned on the map,
That. and nothing more

4 A.M. FLAT ON THE HIGHWAY

Gigantic is the night
The patient stars creep slowly
    across the inky fold
All around is peace
The dove keeps his repose.
The gracious dawn has yet to rouse
    and doff her ebon lover
The quiet stars look down
The slow vast night sleeps on.

AND WE GROW RESTIVE AND ARE SAD.....

And we grow restive, and are sad
No longer does the goal loom clearly in the light
To call youth's fierce resolve, his certain knowledge
Herein lie the wrongs that plague the world
And therein gleams the unsheathed scimitar of right.

The fusion grows
And gray, alas, I know
But where to find, now, black, so base they said
And where, on my youth's cause, is brilliant white!

Time has destroyed them with her ruthless blows
Which beat our purities into alloy
And gone the limpid metal that can brave the keenest sight
That is clear, unmixed and prime.
The lark at morning sings a pure delight
But evening comes, and voices
Querulous and set against each other
Mark the close of day,
The coming of the night.

And we grow restive, and are sad
And note the spot whereon in time of pain
We'll turn upon our couch and call a name
And wonder, fitfully, still proud,
Why in the hour that falls upon us, we are constrained
To make our exit, bravely, not too loud,
Without a word from those we'd have gone
But destined for the gaze of those dull presences
that we would do without.

THE ETERNAL WHEEL

I care not for orchards, rich with ripe berries
I scorn the lagoon, sails exploding the sky
I revolve upon the eternal wheel
And shall come round — Hail the Ram!
To the slow naked told of destiny.

The pale lie of the day has never deceived me
Always I have sensed its wretched deception
The throbbing wings of my myriad myrmidon
Have whispered to me have talked to me
Have lighted upon my shoulders

Yet am I torn and divided
Yet am I driven apart
For the orchards are precious, of silver and gold
For my orchards are precious, of silver and gold.

GO DOWN, DEATH

A trumpet will sound at the swift sea change
Down at the stringest sea and the town,
She sought to catalogue the total of the time
    the lost battalion of a waning life's arrears
In the scandalous breathing of the long forgotten lamb.

Death, go down, down
Oh death, go down
The fire is failing all around
Soon in the meadow's keep
    she will be healing.

It was an earlier year
She stood upon his tunic and invoked an alien clime
To yield up secret images
Reward the errant hours
Award a slender crown.

Death has tailored tonight
    his cloak about the village
Patient, chronic, long attended
Go death, yes, go down!

EXPATRIATE

He wandered many years
        in the jousting hamlets of the brain
Beyond the staged battles of their sanctioned plight,
As they cried, hail to thee, Lord
        and the clear stead beam of thy powerful flashlight
Rejoicing in His name and the 1000 watts of His radiance.

TO SAITCH

Sometimes I feel like I will never stop
Just go on forever
Til one fine mornin
I'll reach up and grab me a handfulla stars
Swing out my long lean leg
And whip three hot strikes burnin down the heavens
And look over at God and say
How about that!

Saitchel Page was a famous negro
base ball player.

SONGS OF NMEKA

BY MARGARETA OLISA

Did You feel Warrior how
I shivered

By the caress of low sounds
Their silence

Nmeka, Nmeka, O hear
Wind sweeping

in the grass; pebbled steps
from a road

and a whistle in the twilight
Highpierced;

Shrill like the voice of Meru
my heart,

this twig; How it swung
above your head

a twig it was? not a snake
Nmeka.

Mount Meru

Throughout the land I have walked
in the memory of your footsteps
where the grass rose long ago
after your passing
and the gloomy rocks of Masai-land
have seen the years engrave my brow,
springs have made my journey green
and tied the dust in purpled specks....
on the breast of mountain, moisted tears
have frozen
high above agaves spires
The gilted leaves of autumn fell
to form a girdle brown — around
the waist of climbing trees
but where your feet are resting now
they have no way to tell;
I follow where the lions hunt
and elands fleeing grace the air
I search beloved everywhere
I search Nmeka — everywhere

I love you, Nmeka
like one loves the song
sung by generations passed
Yes I love you like the pastoral mournings
of great winds
as they die in the dark forest — of
primeval times.....

I love you tormented Nmeka
clinging to the dwindling universe
like the planets spinning
in giant ellipses
— until their sun dies.

Your hair which curls so tight
at your temples
and the straight flame of
the soon burnt-out candle
The shadow of your arms
and the heavy head
have sunk into sleep
fallen out of my hands
the sweet overripened fruit.....

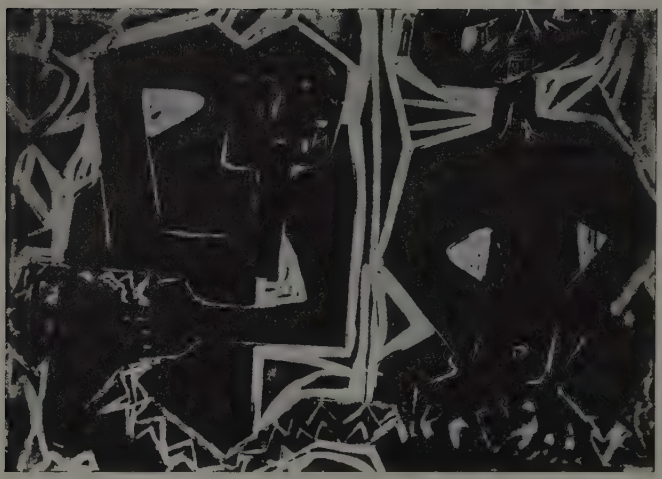
Your dark skin
radiates warmth
and I, what am I
to you beautiful brow
Marry me Nmeka
if the sun will make
my babes so brown
my skin so warm

Bring from the riverbed
the stones we need
and leap to my side
fetch Nmeka — a bride!

O African love;
mine is sorrow!

When your eyes are bare I see
a tenderness breathing through
your ebony skin
pulsating like the promising wink
of a flower
in snow
first of spring in my land
pulsating above
black waters, calming...
The pulse at your eye stirring, I
looking at your heart — its voyage
across your face
The Sea
Your heart — My Boat
Carry Me!

Africa, land where sun forges all
into violent veldt of giant plains
the forest is ripe, o mother I call
for your seed, cry it covered in rain
Mother your body is quiet again
have you breathed a mist of blood
lie cruel and serene on the slain
absorb my unmerciful love o God
Not even the river remembers
a herd of drinking elephants
but by the waterhole in December
the footprints of warrior ants
Yes cry your seeds covered by rains
O Africa mother bury me tight
where flows your blood through veins
and aortas of bodies white.....
Not even the river remembers
the herd of drinking elephant
but into my blood which remembers
pours the echo of warriors chant.....



MAX PIACHIAT

POEMS

I SPEAK ALONE

I speak alone
It is not amusing
But it lasts.

A poet must speak
Or what else could he do
It is a law.

I speak alone
I have reason to speak
But am ashamed of the whole comedy.

I make no noise,
Not even words,
Just silence.

I speak alone

This is not serious
I speak to my friend alone.

I stifle
O lies
I speak of courage

Of a secret hope
I speak alone
Inspite of myself.

No matter if I speak alone
I speak of a new order of things
And its taste of silence.

I speak alone
It has the flavour of a pebble
A lump of ice — or what?

I AM THE YOUNG LEGBA FROM GUINEA

I am the young Legba from Guinea
Who goes astray in everything

I celebrate my birth and my thirst,
And my new carnation coloured woman,

Gabrielle,
Her well-baked lovely thighs,
Her lovely buttocks clothed in light.....

The stage has lost its rights
And my joyful self
Wanders among the new sets.

THE MIRACLE

The miracle continues,
Tomorrow three pink mares
Will stretch out on my black couch
One after the other.

I love these reddish courtesans
Their undifferentiated kisses
Of savage gold.

Afterwards, truly, I shall tell
The rainbow
Of my insane dream,
To love a blue summer like a romance

I AM ALL AND EVERYTHING

I am fire. Greek fire. The iron of lances.
And the bitter taste of harsh berries
I am this rose coloured casket.
This drum of green sandalwood
I am: The corn poppy. The bluebell
And thyme. And mint... And the blue elm.
I am this scandalous earth.
This red polyp.
This mauve rosemary.
This capital volcano This reddish flame.
I am . . this man
Who came at the orange hour.
The flaming cloth.

This flame tree.... brilliant.
I am the blue necked dove. On ermine.
The swallow of the skies. This shower of stars.
I am flint. Crystal.
I am... blood... of gypsies.
I am the vulture. The woodpidgeon of the hunters.
This yellow flax. The scent of mais.
I am this China bread.
The canary. The cherry.
I am the black prince.

I am expecting Florence.
The hired girl
Moist, her skirt open. My Maori servant.

MY JOY

At last I have been born parsimoniously
By mad joy.

I was a savage sick with fear
All scented with rain
My joy still laughs at it.

My joy. That sad, mad countenance.
My joy itches in my bones.
My joy is dead.
My laughter is reborn.
That cataract of entrails.

I rejected the eternal feud of the days.
My joy that unlimited force
Compels me to live
This sad solitude.

My joy refuses words.
Words, those savage mechanisms.
My joy lives. Explodes noisily.

THE ELEPHANTS

The elephants, erect in their fury,
Walk to the borders of noon,
To seek three girls, nude and copper coloured.

They walk without fear
And without anxiety
Along the horizon of silence
To seek the laughter that sits
With blue warriors in permanent darkness

While I, tall nude and large,
I come from far the bow in my fist,
Bleached with the heat, a great sailor,
To plough the sea with my powerful boots.....

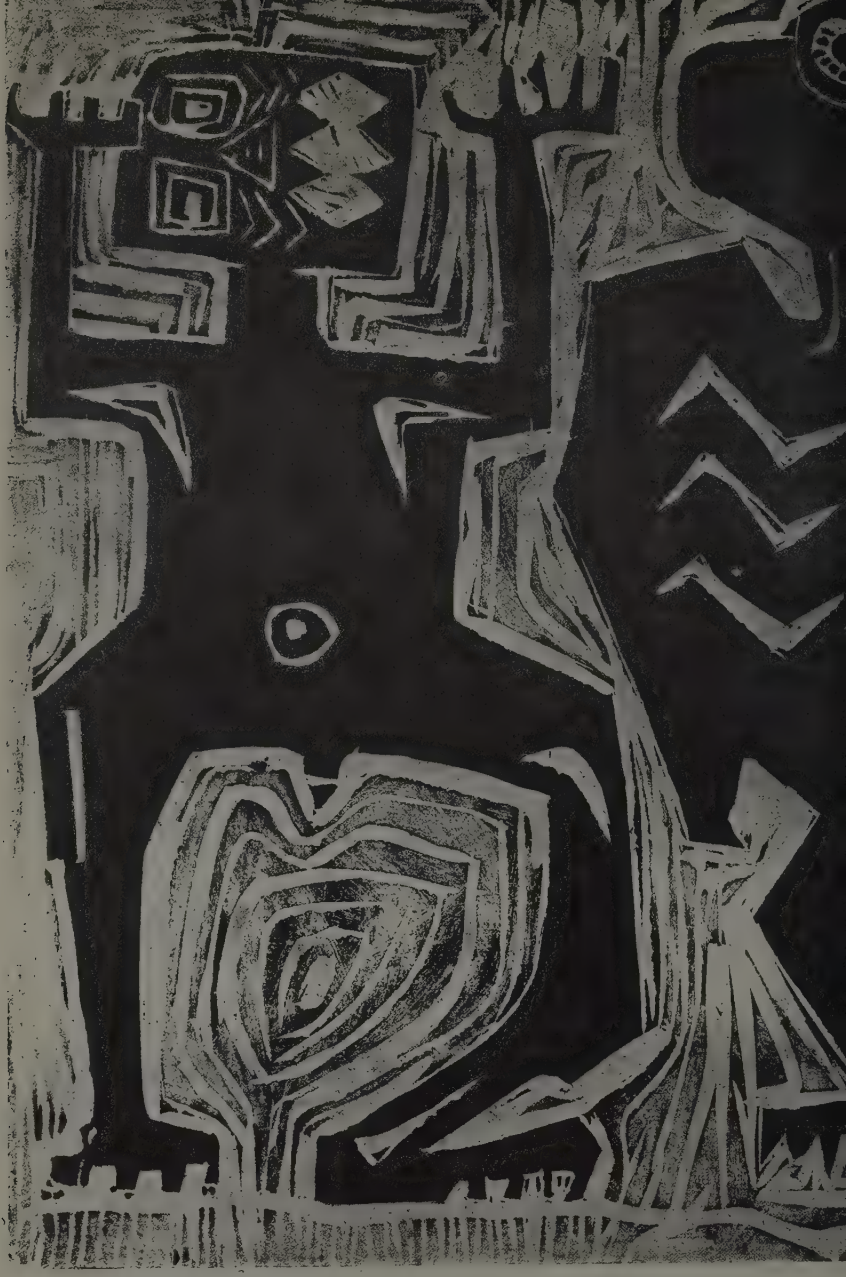
YOUNG BLACK WOMAN

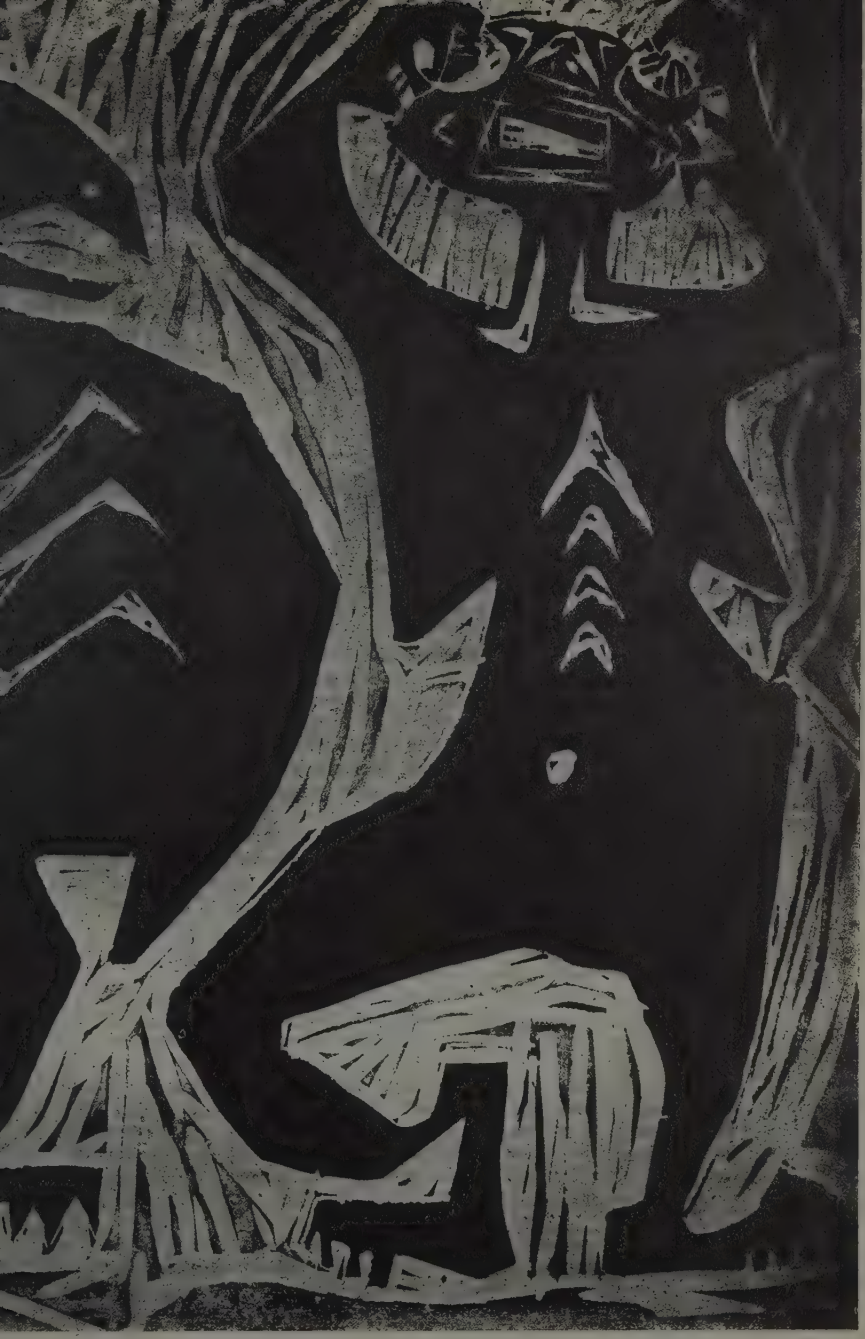
Once I walked alone, at the mercy of the winds...
And now, I am still walking alone towards the tropics
In quest of a silent hetaera.
I shall lift up the young black woman
Seated on the knees of the large asbestos sun
And even in the morning drain her taste of terra cotta.

I went there where marble, gold and ring of burnt wood
Belong to me: to the great sun, white with heat.
Now I return, in my red copper boat.

The jet black woman
Stolen in the great land of Africa.

O my friends, my beauties of eleven o'clock, I return
Multiplied by her.
Presenting the high silken wave
I return to seek blue hell
Paradise bird
et cetera
O my friends, my night beauties of deserted quays.





SLIPPER SATIN

BY ALEX LA GUMA

The street couldn't have changed much in four months. The same two rows of houses were there with their fenced stoops and verandahs, the same Indian grocery shop and the back of the warehouse that had a big sign painted across the whole expanse of the wall. There were the same grey pavements, cracked in places. Perhaps the paint and colour-wash on the houses had faded and peeled somewhat during the four months, and there were wide streaks down the wall of the warehouse, damaging the big black lettering.

And the people were there, too. The little knots of twos and threes at the gates of some of the houses, the row of idle men against the warehouse wall, and the children playing in the gutters. Nothing had really changed in the street.

She stared straight ahead as she came into the street, but sensed the wave of interest that stirred the people. Recognition tapped them on the shoulder and she felt the faces turning towards her. There was a little flurry among the group at one gate, or at a fence, and then it ran on quickly and mysteriously to the next, and the next, down the street, so that the women peered slyly at first, murmuring among themselves, watching her approach, and then breaking into louder chatter when she had passed.

"That is she . . . that's she . ."

"Got four months, *mos*, for immorality . . . "

"Come home again, hey? We don't want damn whores on this street."

And the needle-sharp eyes followed her all the way, suspicious, angry, and secretly happy, too, that there was another victim for the altars of their gossipping.

With the men it was different. They watched her come, some openly, some from under the rims of their lowered eyelids, watching her and smiling gently at the thought of her conquest. Who the hell cared if it had been a white boy? He had been lucky enough, hadn't he? A man didn't begrudge another that kind of victory, even if it had been across the line. A man was a man, and a girl a girl. She was still around, anyway, so maybe there was a chance for one of them.

They were amused at the stupid malice of the womanfolk and they showed their defiance by saying, "Hullo, Myra. How you, Myra? Nice to see you again, Myra. How you keeping, Myra?" And they felt the stares of the women, too, and grinned at the girl to show her it was okay with them.

She smiled gently, hearing their voices, but kept her head up and her eyes forward. But she felt the bitterness inside her like a new part of her being. She had finished with crying, and crying had left the bitterness behind like the layer of salt found in a pan after the water had evaporated. So that even as she smiled, there was a sornful twist to her mouth.

She was tall and brown and good-looking with the fullness of lips, the width of cheekbone, the straight nose and firm chin, the blue eyes, which she had inherited from the intermarriage of her ancestors generations past. Her body was firm, and a little hardened from hard work for four months, but still beautiful; the breasts full and wide at the bases, the belly flat and the thighs and legs long and shapely.

She reached the house at last and climbed the steps onto the verandah. When she opened the front door the smell of cooking came to her from the kitchen at the end of the passageway. The old smell of frying onions and oil.

She walked down the passage and there was the elderly woman, her mother, standing over the pots on the black iron stove, short and stout, with thinning hair tied in a knot at the back of her head.

Myra leaned against the jamb of the kitchen door, a small panic struggling suddenly inside her. But she fought it off and said, casually, "Hullo, Ma."

Her mother looked around with a jerk, a big stirring-spoon poised over a saucepan in the thick, scrubbed hand that shook a little. Myra looked into the decaying, middle-aged eyes and saw the surprise replaced slowly by hardness, the twist of the elderly mouth, the deep lines in the throat and neck and the network of wrinkles.

"Oh. So you back. You back with your shame and disgrace, hey?"

"I'm back, Ma," Myra said.

"You brought disgrace on us," her mother said harshly, the spoon waving in the girl's face. "We all good and decent people, but you brought us shame." The face crumbled suddenly and tears seeped out of the eyes. "You brought us shame. You couldn't go and pick a boy of your own kind, but you had to go sleep with some white loafer. You brought us shame, after how I worked and slaved to bring you up. Nobody ever been to jail in our family, and you a girl, too. It's enough to give an old woman a stroke, that's what it is."

Myra gazed at her mother and pity edged its way forward at the sight of the work-heavy body, the ruined face, the tears, but something else thrust pity aside and she said steadily, "It wasn't any disgrace, Ma. It's no disgrace to love a man, no matter what colour he is or where he comes from. He was nice and he wasn't what you call a white loafer. He would have married me if he could. He always said so."

"What's the matter with your own kind of people? What's the matter with a nice coloured boy?" The quavering voice sobbed and hiccoughed and the girl felt a pang of revulsion.

"There's nothing wrong with coloured boys," she said more in irritation than anger. "Nobody said there was anything wrong with coloured boys. I happened to fall for a white boy, that's all."

"It's no better than being a whore," the old woman sobbed. "No better than that."

"Alright," the girl said bitterly. "I'm no better than a whore. Alright. Leave it like that. I'm a whore and I brought you disgrace. Now then."

"Don't you talk to your own ma like that," the old woman began to shout angrily, waving the spoon about. "You got a cheek to talk to your poor ma like that, after all I done for you. You haven't got respeck, that's what. Got no respeck for your betters. There's your sister Adie getting married soon. To a nice boy of her own kind. Not like you. Getting married and a fine example you are for her. You. You. Yes, you."

"I'm glad Adie's getting married," Myra said with forced dryness. "I hope to God her husband takes her away to go and live on their own."

'You havn't got no respeck, talking to your mother that way. Just shows what kind you are. Adie at least been supporting me while you been in that disgrace, in that jail for four months. And now you just come to bring bad luck into the house. You bad luck, that's what you are."

Myra smiled a little scornfully and said, "Alright, I'm a whore and a disgrace and bad luck. Alright, Ma. But dont' worry. You won't starve with me around."

"If you get a job," the mother snapped. "And if I was a boss I wouldn't give no damn whore a job."

"Oh, stop it, Ma. You'll make yourself sick."

"Ja. And whose fault will it be?"

Myra looked at the hysterical old woman for a second and then turned away. She felt like crying, but she was determined not to. She'd had enough of crying. She left the old woman and turned into the room off the passageway.

It was still the same room, with the wardrobe against one wall and the dressingtable between the two single-beds where she and her sister, Ada, slept. She lay down on her bed in her clothes and stared at the ceiling.

Ada getting married. She was genuinely glad about that. She and Ada had always been very close. She thought, No mixed Marriages Act and no immorality Act and maybe I'd be getting married, too, but you got four months in jail instead of wedding. Poor old Tommy.

She began to wonder whether Tommy really had been serious about loving her. No, he must have been. He really had been. He had loved her, but it must have proved too much for him. But what did he have to go and do that for? If he had loved her that bad he should have stuck it out, no matter what. Maybe Tommy just couldn't see any other way. So that night the police had come in on them he'd gone from the bedroom into the living-room and to his desk and before they knew anything about it he had the little automatic pistol out of the drawer and had shot himself.

So that was that. Poor Tommy. Maybe he thought it was a disgrace, too. Maybe he thought that, in spite of all his love. But she didn't care any more.

She lay on the bed and tried not to think about it. She thought about Ada instead. She would like to give Ada a nice wedding present. She wouldn't go to the wedding ceremony, of course. She'd save the dear old family the embarrassment. But she'd have to give Ada a nice wedding present.

And then in the middle of her thoughts the front door banged, feet hurried along the passageway, and the door opened and there was Ada.

"Myra. Myra, *ou* pal. You're back."

Her younger sister was there, flinging bag and jacket aside, and hugging her. "I heard those damn old hens up the street cackling about my sister, and I just ran all the way."

"Hullo, Adie. Good to see you again. Give me a kiss. Yes, I think they'll be cackling a long time still." She added bitterly. "The old woman feels the same."

"Don't you worry, *bokkie*. Hell, I'm glad you're back for the wedding."

"How's the boy friend?"

"Okay." Ada grinned at her sister. "He doesn't give a damn. His family had things to say, of course. But I've got him like that." She showed a fist, laughing. "He'll listen to Adie, family or no family."

"You got everything ready?"

"Oh, yes. The wedding dress will be ready the end of the week, on time for Saturday. I managed to save and bought some stuff for the house. Joe put in for one of those Council cottages and they said we can move in."

"I'll miss you."

"Garn. You can *mos* come and visit us any time. Listen, if you like I could talk to Joe about you coming to stay with us. What do you say?"

"No. You go off on your own and be happy. I'll stay on here. Me and Ma will maybe fight all the time, but I'll manage."

"What you going to do, Myra?"

"Don't know," Myra told her. "The old lady will need looking after. Say, have you really got everything,"

"Oh, yes. Except maybe the frock to change into next Saturday night. I'll have to wear the wedding dress right through the whole business. I did see the damn nicest party frock at Paris Fashions, but I suppose I'll have to do without a change on Saturday night. It's so lousy having to wear the wedding gown at the party, too. Things and stuff might spill onto it. The bride ought to change for the evening celebrations. We're having a party at Joe's place. I thought it'd be grand to have a dress to change into, though. But I worked out every penny, so I won't be able to afford eight guineas. Such nice darn slipper satin, too. Real smart."

Ada got up from the edge of the bed and started removing her work clothes. "Tell me, Myra, was it bad up there?"

"Not too bad. I did washing most of the time. But I don't want to talk about it, man."

"We won't," Ada smiled struggling into black stovepipe jeans. "That's all finished and done with. Now you just take it easy and I'll call you when supper's ready. You like some tea?"

"Thanks."

Ada grinned and ducked out of the room, leaving Myra alone again on the single bedstead. Dear old Ada, with a whore for a sister. The old woman would probably say it would be bad luck to have me coming visiting them. She felt sorry for her mother, for Ada, for all those women up the street, for Tommy. Poor old Tommy. Tommy couldn't stand up to it. Him and his love. Him and his I love you. She had died, too, she thought, the instant Tommy pulled the trigger. Poor old Tommy. She felt sorry for all of them.

She thought, Adie is going to be happy. She wanted Adie to be happy and she told herself Adie would have that slipper satin dress she wanted, as a present from her. She could earn eight guineas easily.

THE THIN WALL

BY ALSTON ANDERSON

When the taxi was gone Bennett put his change in his pocket and, without removing his hand, stood looking up at the house. It was a three-storied, red brick house that had obviously been privately owned at one or several times. The door had been freshly painted white and the polished brass numbers on it read 129. As he stood inspecting the door it opened and a woman appeared. She was preoccupied with a small wastebasket which she held as if it contained rotten eggs, but when she saw him she paused within the doorway, holding the basket against her housecoat. As he removed his hand from his pocket and started up the stairs with his suitcase he could feel her appraising him, her distinctly Irish features almost expressionless, pricing first his shoes, then his grey topcoat and striped tie. When she looked into his eyes she nodded, ever so slightly, in approval. She held the door open and stood aside.

"Are you moving in?" she asked.

"Yes, I am."

"I'm Mrs. O'Rourke."

"How do you do," Bennett said.

Mrs. O'Rourke followed him into the vestibule. She placed her wastebasket carefully on the rug and let the door close softly behind her.

"My name is — "

"My son and I have the ground floor apartment," Mrs. O'Rourke said. "It's the only apartment in the building except the one in the basement, but we don't count that as an apartment because it's a sort of makeshift. The rooms are on the second and third floors. I see you have labels on your suitcase. Have you been away?"

"Yes, I have."

"Did you just get back, or — "

"Yes — "

"Or have you been back for some time..."

"Yes, I just got back. Yesterday, as a matter of fact."

"How nice. Were you in Europe?"

"Yes."

"For how long?"

"Almost five years."

"Mmm. My son wanted to go to Europe last year, but we couldn't afford it. I'm a registered nurse and he's been at college for the past three years. It's a struggle, but — ha, ha! — we manage somehow. What did you say your name was?"

"Johnson. Bennett Johnson."

"Bennett Johnson. That's a nice name, Mr. Johnson. You kow, you're not the *first* Negro we've had here. Three years ago we had another boy — another fellow whose name was . . . . hmm . . . . Jones? No, Do you know that I had that boy's name right on the *tip* of my tongue the moment I saw you and now I can't think of it to save me. At any rate he lived up there on the second floor with his boyfriend — I've forgotten *his* name, too, he had a German name — I don't know what their relationship was but they were *terribly* nice, both of them. I'm trying my best to think of that coloured boy's name, but it's slipped me completely. I thought perhaps you might know him. Is your room on the third floor?"

"I was told over the telephone that —"

"Well, the rooms on the third floor are —'

"I was told that —"

"The rooms on the third floor are small, but comfortable. You see, when my son and I moved here four years ago the house was owned by a man named Early. But when he moved to San Francisco he sold the house to a man named Joe Brown and Brown had the two top floors divided into separate rooms. There're all bachelors living here now. You aren't married, are you?"

"No, I'm not. I was told over the telephone that there would be someone in room 5 who would tell me where my room is and give me the keys."

"Room 5? That must be Frank Telford. He's been with us for some time and he lends a hand around the house. He may be up there now. At least, I haven't heard him go out."

While Mrs. O'Rourke talked about Frank Telford and other roomers Bennett looked around the vestibule. It was clean, almost immaculately clean, just as the advertisement in *The Villager* had said:

129 BETHUNE ST
Single room, man only, $8 50
per wk. Maid, linen svc. Quiet,
clean, respectable house. Man only.
Phone WA-9-4940

There was a small black table against the wall to the left, and on it was a brass tray on which letters were neatly piled. The top envelope, Bennett noticed, was addressed to Comdr. Wolcott Mabry, USN Ret'd. Just beyond the table was a partly open door which, he assumed correctly, led to Mrs. O'Rourke's apartment.

"Now you just go right upstairs," Mrs. O'Rourke finished, "and make yourself at home. We're happy to have you."

"Thank you."

At the top of the carpeted stairs Bennett paused and looked around for room 5. Finding it he rested his suitcase and knocked on the door. There was no answer. He knocked again.

"Someone looking for me?" a man's voice called from above.

"Do you live in room 5?"

"Yeah. Come on up."

The stairs leading to the third floor were not carpeted, but the polished boards were wide and made a pleasant, aged sound as Bennett mounted. There was a narrow hallway at the top of the stairs, and this led into a foyer around which there were doors which led to the rooms. There were framed prints on

the walls depicting scenes from American history, and against the far wall stood a chiffonier on which there was a vase of slightly faded flowers.

"In here," the voice called.

Bennett followed the sound of the voice to the room on the left of the chiffonier.

"Come on in. The door's open."

Bennett went in. The owner of the voice was a man in his mid-twenties who, in his underwear, looked as if he might be a ballet dancer. He had been hanging a curtain over the window of the room which, Bennett noticed, faced the street. Having finished he stepped backward and, with his back to Bennett, said, "How do you like it?"

"It looks quite nice."

"I tried to find some green ones to go with that off-color green wall, but all I could find was these white ones. But these'll be O.K., don't you think?"

"Yes, they'll be fine."

"My name is — " the man began, turning. "Oh," he said, looking at Bennett with mild surprise, "my name is Frank Telford."

"How're you," Bennett said, taking the outstretched hand. "Mine's Bennett Johnson."

"Were you the one I talked to over the 'phone?"

"Yes."

"Swell. I painted these walls last week all by myself. Not bad, huh? Geez, you should've seen the room before it was painted. The guy who lived here before was a painter and he splashed stuff all over hell and back. He said there wasn't enough light in the room, so he moved out." Frank took a pack of cigarettes from the table near him and lit one. He inhaled deeply and appraised the room. "It's sort of small,' he said, "but what the hell. You don't need a penthouse, do you? You got a closet, a place for books, a table, a bed, a bureau, a couple chairs . . . a single man don't need no more than that. What do you do?"

"I'm an architect."

"Oh. For a while I thought you were a writer. You sort of look the type. The last colored fella that lived here was a writer. Or at least he *said* he was. Mason or Maywell his name was. Nice guy. If you need anything I'll be downstairs in number 5. I act as superintendent here, sort of, but I'm not, really. I do it because it saves me rent. By the way, speaking of rent you can either give it to me or Joe Brown. Joe Brown owns the joint. He comes around on Sundays."

"Fine."

"O.K., then. And don't worry about a thing, Bennett. I mean — well, *you* know what I mean. A lot of people try to give colored guys a hard time, but this house ain't like that. Everybody that lives here is strictly on the up and up except that guy Mabry, but don't worry about him. He lives right next door to you and he drinks a lot but if he tries to give you a hard time you just let us know about it and —"

"That's very kind of you," Bennett said, "but I think I can take care of anything that comes up."

"Swell. O.K. then, Bennett, see you around.'

"So long."

When the door closed Bennett opened his suitcases and began arranging his things. He could hear Frank Telford placing a coin in the pay 'phone which, he later saw, was just outside his door. When Frank began to speak — his voice lowered almost to a whisper — Bennett tried to listen.

"Joe? Frank. Hi. The new roomer just came in. What? I can't talk any louder because these walls are so thin. He's colored.... How the hell should *I* know... I talked to him over the 'phone and he said he'd take it sight unseen. Yeah. Yeah, I know, it's gettin' so you can't tell by the voice any more.... Yeah, sure, he's a nice guy. He's an architect.... An ARCHItect. Yeah. Naw, there won't be any trouble. Sure, Joe.... What?.... Awright, awright, I'll see 'em in person from now on. Sure, Joe. So long."

Commander Wolcott Mabry placed his hands to his head and sat up in bed, slowly. He rubbed the thin, veined, pink lids of his eyes and looked around the dim, shipshape room. Through the penumbra of his sleepshaded mind his memory raced backward through the hum of a hundred wavewashed ships and then returned, with the sudden impact of a disturbed bedspring, to the present. He looked at the blur of the watch on his wrinkled wrist and, lifting it closer to his eyes, read 10:45. He sat thus for a time, watching the red minute hand of the watch move slowly, irrevocably round and round thinking *time*. He got out of bed, steadied himself briefly and, barefooted crossed the room and opened the blinds.

The lazy leaden-stepping
Hours
Whose speed is but the heavy
Plummet's pace

he recited silently, shielding his eyes from the sudden-blinding sun and watching (it seemed to him for the thousandth time) the whitehaired woman across the street as she emerged from her basement and mounted the stairs leading to the sidewalk with agonizingly evident pain. *Death*, he thought. *Death*. He grunted drily and moved away from the window.

As he laced his shoes he thought of himself as a young man standing on the porch of his family's white frame house in a Maine fishing village and of his desire, ironically frustrated by his appointment to Annapolis, to be a painter. He thought of the faces (he could still see them clearly) he wanted to paint, fishermen's faces, weathered and wrinkled with clear, seablue eyes. Aware of the pain in his back as he bent over his shoes he could see, from the corner of one eye, the minute-hand of his watch moving slowly, ineluctably forward. *Time*. He swore silently, bitterly, and rose. As he reached for his bathrobe he could hear the unmistakable sound of a drawer being opened in the room adjacent to his own. *Another transient*, he thought. *Another transient soul*. He put on his robe, picked up his soap and towel and shaving gear and headed for the bathroom at the end of the hallway.

Twenty minutes later he opened the bathroom door and inhaled deeply as a draft of cold, fresh air flowed past him. He moved over to the commode, rested one knee on the closed lid and took the cover from the water tank directly behind it. He rolled up the right sleeve of his robe and put his hand into the tank, his fingers groping uncertainly for the suction cup covering the outlet. Finding the cup he removed it and the tank flushed noisily. He replaced the cup, removed his arm and watched the tank refill, listening patiently to the nasal, hissing sound. He could hear footsteps descend the hallway and pause

at the door. He looked up from the tank. Bennett stood in the doorway with a towel over his arm, his white undershirt accentuating the brownness of his bare skin. He looked younger than his thirty-three years. The two men stared at each other in silence, neither of them moving. Mabry could feel himself reddening.

"You'll have to wait until I've finished," he said.

"It won't work."

"What?"

"I said it won't work. The water tank, I mean. I noticed it earlier this morning," Bennett said.

"Well, you just keep your hands off it from now on."

"I didn't touch it. It won't work because the tank is placed directly against the wall and the wall slants at approximately a twelve degree angle. The tank will have to be moved a few inches from the wall so that —"

"Will you go away and mind your own business?" Mabry said. And then, turning and speaking into the tank so that his voice issued cavernously and almost ominously forth: "I thought some idiot must have been tampering with this," thinking the while *He's right. Of course he's right.*

Bennett shrugged and returned to his room.

"Johnson!"

Bennett had known it would happen. For three weeks, now, he had tried to visualize the form it would take. He remembered the newspaper accounts of physical brutality toward Negroes that he had read years previously, and occasionally he thought that this might happen to him, too. He thought of his words to Frank Telford: *I think I can take care of anything that comes up.*

"Johnson!"

Now he began to wonder. He sat quite still and tried to read. When Mabry called again he got up and, with as much curiosity as fear, went to the door of Mabry's room.

"Come in here, Johnson."

He went in, closed the door behind him and leaned against it. Mabry was sitting at his desk with a half-empty bottle of Scotch and a glass before him. "Don't be afraid, Johnson," he said: "I'm not going to hurt you. Violence is the result of folly and I'm not a foolish man. I want to tell you something."

Mabry spoke slowly and distinctly, his voice lacking the slur of inebriation which his flushed features seemed to demand.

"The only *niggers* I have ever spoken to in my life, Johnson," Mabry said, enunciating the syllables of the forbidden word with delicious viciousness, as if they were edible as well as suitable, "have been servants and mess-boys. You have the honor of being the first — He looked at Bennett's striped tie and button-down shirt and sneered. Then he picked up his glass and left the sentence unfinished.

"Do you know what that is, Johnson?" Many pointed to a large, unframed print tacked neatly against the wall before him. "It's called 'The Garden of Delights' and was painted in the fifteenth century by a man named Hieronymus Bosch. An *artist*, Johnson, something that not one of you *niggers* has ever been in the entire blind ignominious history of your race. And until you do, Johnson, until one of you does something to equal that I *refuse*! . . ." Mabry rose and banged his reddened fist on his desk, "I *refuse* to live with you as

an equal or to regard you as such. I have therefore begun action, Johnson, to have you evicted and sent back to Harlem where you belong. Now get out of here."

Bennett walked with shoulders hunched against the cold, biting wind down a dark, ice-covered street in Copenhagen. The gabled roofs of houses were covered with snow and, though none fell, the wind whipped ice particles from the rooftops in eerie wisps through the thin air. It was early morning and the street, save for an occasional greatcoated policeman, was deserted. As he reached an intersection he could see a cyclist plodding determinely in his direction. He stopped at the corner, waiting for the cyclist to pass and marvelling that anyone could ride in such weather. As he rode by, the cyclist glanced up at Bennett and then rode on a short distance. Suddenly he turned and looked back at Bennett, as if he had seen something incredible. As he turned the cycle slid crazily across the ice and he fell. Bennett ran over to him and helped him up.

"Are you hurt?"

In an instant he knew that the other knew no English, that he was probably a worker who had been surprised at seeing a Negro. He smiled, then began to laugh. The Dane's blue eyes, wide at first with unbelief, narrowed into mirth. Bennettt could hear him laughing softly into his muffler. They stood there holding onto each other's arms and laughing, their laughter rising gradually in volume and intensity, gripping each other's arms with shivering frenzy while their laughter rose to an absurd, almost hysterical pitch high above the howling wind, laughing at the ludicrousness of it all, of life, so that now, with Mabry gripping his arms and shaking him, his blue eyes wide with fear and rage and drunkenness, shouting "Get out! Get out, I say!" for a moment he couldn't understand why it wasn't the Dane, or why Mabry wasn't laughing, too. When he recovered he said:

"Alright. Let go of my arms."

Inside his own room Bennett looked at his reflection in the mirror and saw that his eyes were red with tears of laughter. Then he threw himself on his bed and died.

"How're you this evening, Mr. Johnson?" Mrs. O'Rourke asked.

"Very well, thanks. And you?"

"Oh, so so. Listen, Mr. Johnson —"

"Yes?"

Bennett leafed absently through the pile of letters on the tray. Mrs. O'Rourke stood in her doorway holding onto the knot as if it were the hand of a child.

"Listen," she said. "We heard all about what happened last night. Lord sakes we could almost hear the old man shouting down here! You know, a few days ago he was down here trying to get my son and I to sign some petition or other against you and we said that we absolutely would *not*. No sirree, not on your life. We'll do *no such thing*, we said. Why the *nerve* of that old devil. My son George said that if he'd been in *your* place he'd have thrown him right down those stairs. I think it's a downright shame for him to have called you those names.

"What names?"

"George said he wouldn't have cared *how* old he was."

"What names?"

"Well — *you* know what I mean."

"You mean because he used the word 'nigger' in my presence?"

"Why yes. George said —"

"That's what I am and I'm proud of it."

"George said he'd have thrown him down *both* flights of stairs. Yes, sir. What did you say?"

"I said I'm a nigger and I'm proud of it."

"Well, be that as it may . . . what I mean is . . . well, I just think it's *dreadful* the way that old man . . ."

"Good night, Mrs. O'Rourke."

Bennett mounted the stairs two at a time and before he quite realized it he was standing in Mabry's room, leaning over the half-asleep form and gripping the collar of his pajamas saying "Look-a-here you red necked son of a bitch, now you just look-a-here," incongruously trying to reconstruct his entrance, trying to remember whether he had knocked at the door or whether he had pushed against it and broken the lock and then remembering, suddenly, releasing the old man but still leaning over him menacingly, that the door had been latched, not locked, and that he had broken the latch, thinking *Maybe I should've stayed down there in North Carolina where I come from but I was given an inch and just as some wit predicted I've taken my mile no I can't say that,* thinking in wild confusion *I care less than a damn about your art or whether you got it from Europe or Africa I didn't go to Europe to find art but I saw it nonetheless, I looked at it but the thing the white man doesn't understand, the thing the self-appointed freedom-givers can't understand is that they can't give half and keep half they have to give all and that includes their women and that's what really hurts but I can't say that, either* staring silently down at the wide-eyed old man and saying, finally, controlling his breath and speaking in an astonishingly calm voice.

"I saw the original of that print at the *Prado* in Madrid, Mabry. I agree with you that it's quite good. But if you ever again equate art with human progress I'll come in here one night and cut your throat from ear to ear, I promise you. Good night."

"We'll have to get rid of him, that's all there is to it," Joe Brown said. He unzipped his leather jacket and tilted his brown felt hat, the brim of which cast a shadow over his dark features. "We just gotta get rid of him."

"But how're we gonna go about it?" Frank Telford said. "You gotta have a reason, you can't just throw him out."

"Whaddya mean I can't throw him out. This is *my* house, ain't it? Come on, gimme a hand with this stuff."

Frank hesitated. "But we can't *do* it," he said. "It's against the law, to begin with."

"Look, I been in this real estate business too long to hesitate over a thing like this," Joe Brown said. "You got a decision to make and you make it. Either you throw a sonovabitch out or you don't. Period. Law my black eye. You fool around with these intellectual bastards down here and next thing you know you're standin' in a court of law and it costs you a couple hundred bucks. This bastard sneaks behind my back and goes to the housing authorities with some document or other and now they're breathin' down my neck for

overchargin' and you stand there talkin' to me about law? Come on, you gonna give me a hand, or ain't ya?"

Joe Brown began taking Mabry's clothes from the closet and throwing them loosely and carelessly into an open trunk. Frank Telford frowned, watching him.

"You can't do it, Joe", Frank Telford said.

"You know what he was doin', don't you? He was tryin' to get this fella Johnson thrown out. Instead o' comin' to me the idiot goes to the housing authorities. Can you figure a thing like that? The *housing* authorities! Hell, they got no idea what it costs to run a house like this, with these bastards burnin' lights day an' night, day an' night and that goddam latrine on the bum. For Chrissake every time a plumber comes in this joint it costs me ten bucks; and that's more than a week's rent for one o' these stinkin' rooms. Gimme a match."

Frank handed over a pack of matches and Joe Brown lit his cigar.

"Can you beat a lowdown trick like that?" he asked, waving the match furiously up and down long after it was out. "The least he coulda done was *call* me. But no. He sneaks behind my back. Hell, *I* don't wanna throw Johnson out... Johnson's a *gennulman* he's no ordinary nig—— What the hell's that?"

Joe Brown stood looking up at the Bosch print on Mabrys wall. Then he removed their tacks and held the print before him at arm's length, inspecting it as if it were something obscene. He shrugged and put it under his arm, then closed the trunk and began pushing it across the foyer and down the narrow hallway. Frank Telford descended the stairs without a word, went into his room and closed the door. Joe Brown moved to the top step and held the trunk by one handle. He noticed then that the latch on the trunk was at the breaking point and this troubled him momentarily. But he dismissed the thought and began bumping the trunk noisily down the two flights of stairs and onto the front doorstep. There he paused and wiped his brow, glancing surreptitiously up and down the deserted Sunday street. He looked at his watch and knew that he had timed his eviction perfectly. Commander Mabry was taking his Sunday constitutional. He bumped the trunk down the stone stairs onto the sidewalk. As he tried to lean it upright and out of the way of eventual pedestrians the lid of the trunk flew open and its contents spilled onto the sidewalk. Joe Brown took the print from under his arm, dropped it on the sidewalk and looked down at the melange of books and ties and crumpled shirts and suits and swore viciously. He began stuffing things into the still upright trunk, breathing heavily through flared mostrils. A stray male cat, its broken fur showing signs of recent battle, crept cautiously forward and sniffed hopefully at a tie. Joe Brown paused, and for the first time removed the cigar from his mouth. He inspected the gnarled stub and threw it behind him. Then, very gently, he lifted the cat and placed it out of reach, saying "Now you run home like a good little kitty." He returned to the protesting trunk, packing it roughly and at the same trying to close it despite its upright position, despite a limp pant leg which kept popping out as if it had a will of its own. Failing to close the trunk completely and giving up out of exhaustion and desperation he stood upright and kicked it savagely, then got into his car. He drove furiously up the empty street, repeating over and over. *Sneaking greyhaired bastard.*

As Joe's car turned the corner of Bethune Street the trunk wavered un-

steadily and then, like a wounded man, slumped to the sidewalk and disgorged its innards.

Commander Mabry liked to sit in Washington Square Park on Sunday mornings, regardless of season. In Summer he liked to watch young mothers with their children or old men at their chessboards, and in Winter he enjoyed the susurrus of wind through the bare, black branches of trees. On this particular morning, after having finished the Sunday *Times* (or more correctly the *Book Review* and *News of the Week* sections, which was all he ever read of it) he sat thinking of Bennett. For a brief moment he relived the horror of the Negro bursting suddenly into his room and recalled looking with more astonishment than fear into the wildly staring brown face. Earlier in the morning he had seen Bennett. He had been standing just inside his doorway adjusting the broken latch when he realized that Bennett was standing before him, that he had probably been standing there for some time, observing him with the quiet patience of a well-trained servant with a message. Slightly startled he had looked up.

"I'd like to apologize for having threatened you last night," Bennett said. "I hope you'll forgive me."

Mabry remembered, too, not knowing what to say and therefore saying nothing at all, merely returning to the latch and methodically tightening the last loose screw.

It began to rain. Commander Mabry rose from the park bench and started homeward. After walking a few feet he realized that he had forgotten his newspaper and, turning went back to the bench and picked up the fat bulk of the Sunday *Times*, thinking *What a pity it is that man is ever young in mind and soon so old in that which clothes it.* Carefully, lest he disturbed his back, he straightened himself and left the park.

When he reached Bethune Street it was raining steadily. He walked slowly nevertheless, listening with pleasure to the rythmic patter of rain against a tin drain. He had turned down the brim of his now dripping felt hat and walked with his head down, conscious only of the pleasant sound of rain and the reflections of red brick houses in the black, glistening street.

For a long time he was not aware of what he saw, not aware, even, that he had stopped walking. He stood here, dripping, holding the now soggy bulk of the newspaper loosely under his arm and looking down at the trunk as if the name stencilled on it were not his own, staring with numb disbelief at the drenched pantleg lying disconsolate and dead with rain (as if it had died while trying to escape the prison of the trunk). And then he saw the print.

He cried out, dropped the newspaper and ran as fast as his age would permit and knelt by the print. He picked it up and held it before him, his legs and back twitching spasmodically as if each muscle would express its separate rebellion and grief, his hands trembling and his lips uttering a sound which was neither one of joy nor sadness but rather a series of dry, toneless grunts. Through the veil of rain and tears in his eyes he could see the dim outline of a man's shoe across the center of the print, the hobnailed heel and flat, spatulate toe forming a grotesque frame around the already distraught figures beneath.

It was some time, too, before he realized that there was someone working quickly and quietly beside him, placing the sodden clothing in the trunk and setting it down properly and closing the lid, then coming over to him and

taking him gently by the arm. "Come on, Commander," he heard a voice say. "You'll catch cold out here."

Above the sound of the rain and of his own griefladen sobs he tried to recognise the owner of the voice and then it occurred to him, suddenly, that it didn't matter who the person was. He permitted himself to be lifted to his feet and helped up the stone stairs.

"Never mind about the trunk," the person said. "I'll bring it up." He could hear the front door open and a voice saying, very quietly, "God help us, Commander. God help us all."

IBO AND YORUBA ART

A COMPARISON BY ULLI BEIER

Of the vast literature on African art which has been produced during the last decade, the majority consists of hopeless generalisations. Theories are developed that are supposed to fit such different tribes as the Baluba, the Bamileke, the Ibo, the Yoruba, the Baoule and the Senufo — all of which are lumped together under such vague terms as "African" art or "primitive" art. Only a few of the numerous tribes thus referred to are well documented, however, and few people can have sufficient knowledge of the whole of West Africa to be entitled to theorise on "African Art."

In the nineteenth century such an attitude was understandable. African art differed then in certain basic principles from conventional European art, and so did of course Polynesian or Red Indian art and the difference was negatively defined as "primitive". Today, we find that most African art styles have quite a lot in common with modern European art in their basic approach to form and expression. On the other hand a closer look at the bewildering variety of African styles seems to indicate that a more detailed and localised study is called for. The times are gone when one could get away with talking vaguely about "the fear of the unknown" in primitive art and so on. Compare the classical aloofness of an Ife bronze with the powerful expressionism of Warega ivories, the ecstatic Senufo figures with the naive reliefs in Abomey, the dramatic art of the Ibos with the pedestrian brass plaques of Benin. What a rich variety of cultures and art forms!

Surely the difference in styles must be somehow related to a corresponding cultural variety? Surely style in art is not merely an accident, but has been arrived at because it best expresses what the particular culture is trying to put across?

One does not have to be an expert on African art to be able to pick out one Bamileke carving among — say — a hundred Senufo ones. But to interprete the meaning of these striking stylistic differences is a more difficult matter. We do not usually know enough about the different cultures in order to venture to draw such comparisons.

In the following I shall attempt such a comparison and contrast of the two art forms I know best: Ibo and Yoruba. It is of course fairly simple and straightforward to compare the art forms stylistically, from a purely aesthetic point of view.

As one proceeds to try and relate the peculiarities of the style to the overall pattern of the culture one enters the field of speculation. Many of my conclusions there may be disputable, but others with a more thorough background of the cultures concerned will, I hope be tempted to elaborate on this sketch.

SIMILARITIES

Ibo and Yoruba art have certain basic things in common: they do not attempt faithfully to copy nature. The principal subject of Ibo and Yoruba sculpture is the human figure, but the forms are always transposed, and the natural proportions always altered to suit some specific purpose.

Furthermore both art forms are equally removed from everyday life. The figures do not weep, laugh, meditate or show pain. Nor are portraits of individuals ever attempted.

But this is where the similarities end.

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Even a quick glimpse at Ibo and Yoruba art makes one aware of some essential differences. *Ibo* art immediately strikes one as tense and dramatic. In *Yoruba* art one is conscious of harmony and balance and repose. This overall impression is confirmed in most details.

POSTURE

Nearly all *Yoruba* figures are static and vertical. The weight of the body is evenly distributed on both legs. The carver conceives the figure as front, back and two sides, and there is usually no twist or turn in the body axis. Diagonals are on the whole avoided and the arms are kept close to the body.

Ibo carving on the other hand aims at movement. There is often a slight twist in the body axis, creating a tension between the rump and the hips. The arms often move away from, or against the body, thus creating counter movement and diagonals. It is a common device in Ibo art to carve the arms from separate pieces of wood, so that they can be used to bring in a new angle and a new tension. (See plate IV) This device is not employed by Yoruba carvers.

In this context it is interesting to compare the treatment of the two horsemen on Plates IV and V. The *Yoruba carver* (Plate V) has carved horse and rider from one piece. In order to fit them both into the log, the horse is reduced considerably in proportion. By doing so he also achieves the calm, vertical posture of dignity and repose, which is undisturbed by any diagonals. Following the same principle, the upper arm of the horseman (which follows the line of the body) is much longer and much more prominent than the lower arm which runs against the body movement.

The *Ibo* artist, on the other hand, preferred to use a separate piece of wood for the horse. The horse thus creates a movement running against the rider; and to increase the tension, the horse is *not* placed at right angles to the rider. The head is slightly turned to the left, and arms, carved from separate pieces of wood provide two more directions and two more angles. All these devices create intensity and tension that is in sharp contrast to the calm harmony of the Yoruba horseman.

It is interesting also to observe what the *Yoruba* carver does when he carves a horseman on an Ifa board. (V b) In this case the figure has to be composed into a circle and accordingly it is now a pure vertical that would create tension. The horse is therefore extended and the whole is woven together with a lizard and a bird into a circular composition.

BASIC FORMS

In *Yoruba* art the basic forms are *organic*. Certain anatomical features are clearly recognisable in most Yoruba carvings: forehead, cheekbones, eyelids, nostril are clearly derived from natural forms. They are merely stylized and the natural proportions have been rearranged. The carvers attention is usually focussed on the head. The features of the face are given the greatest detail. They seem to be bulging out, following some pressure from within. The eyes, are unusually large, because a man's spirit and mind find expression in them. Ears are unimportant, set far back in the head, and stylised according to some simple formula.

Ibo forms tend to be angular and geometrical. They are far more stylized and much further removed from naturalistic forms. Sometimes the mouth is the most prominent feature in the face. Usually the mouth is tense — the lips spread out bearing the teeth, like a person in a state of excitement, or anger, or ecstasy.

Yoruba closeness to organic forms is shown in the treatment of a woman's breasts. These are mostly full and pendulous, one can feel the milk in them. On *Ibo* carvings they are usually less sensuous, and merely form part of the general pattern.

THE USE OF THE MATERIAL

The *Yoruba* carver is in harmony with his material. He recognises its limitations and submits to them. If he uses a log of wood, he composes his figure into the basic shape of the raw wood. The *Ibo* artist sees a challenge in the material whose limitations he wants to overcome. Frequently figures are built up from several pieces of wood. Most striking are the mud sculptures. With the help of a bamboo skeleton, the Ibo artist builds up mud figures with their arms sticking wide away from the body — a feature to which mud does not lend itself. In fact Ibo mud figures are so constructed that their arms break away after one or two years, while the whole figure seldom lasts more than five years. (Plate VIII) *Yorubas* have few mud figures but there are some few life size images of Eshu, all of which are composed in solid, round forms, which the material itself seems to suggest.

PAINTING

If we disregard the very recent introduction of European oil colours into Yoruba art, we can say that the *Yoruba* artist used paint sparingly and in a subdued fashion. His main colours were indigo and camwood, both colours that are subdued enough to merely underline and set into relief the forms of the carver.

In Ibo sculpture painting is more elaborate and has a life of its own. Often the design of the painter cuts across the basic shapes of the carvings. The principal colours used are black and white, with an occasional third colour (often bright orange) thus creating a maximum contrast.

MARKS

Facial marks or body painting — often shown on woodcarvings — are also significant. *Yoruba* marks always underline the structure of the face. They are always in harmony with anatomical features. (Plate VII) *Ibo* marks on the other hand boldly cut across anatomical features. In Plate VI the face seems cut asunder by the markings, which creates a sensation of violent tension. Sometimes facial marks run across the eye or diagonally across the nose.

SUMMING UP

All these details help to produce two entirely different almost opposite styles. *Yoruba* art expresses harmony and repose. In the better examples there is a feeling of strong concentration, and many of the religious carvings seem to be in a mood of receptiveness — as if the god were about to mount the head of the worshipper.

Ibo art on the other hand is dramatic and energetic. Its best examples have an unparalleled dynamism and they convey a sense of excitement and ecstasy which has no equal in West African art.

Are these stylistic differences related to the general cultural pattern in the two societies? In a short article like this it is not possible to go into a great amount of detail, but I think that by spotlighting briefly some key subjects like government, religion and the position of women one will be able to see that the differences in artistic style emanate from a different attitude to life.

GOVERNMENT

Yoruba government is a highly organised affair. Although the Yoruba had Obas or kings, their government was not autocratic. It was a complicated structure in which authority and responsibility were carefully divided between the Oba, the Ogboni society, the war chiefs and other title holders, the Oro society, the Egunguns etc. Good government depended on none of these institutions becoming too strong and a harmonious balance being achieved.

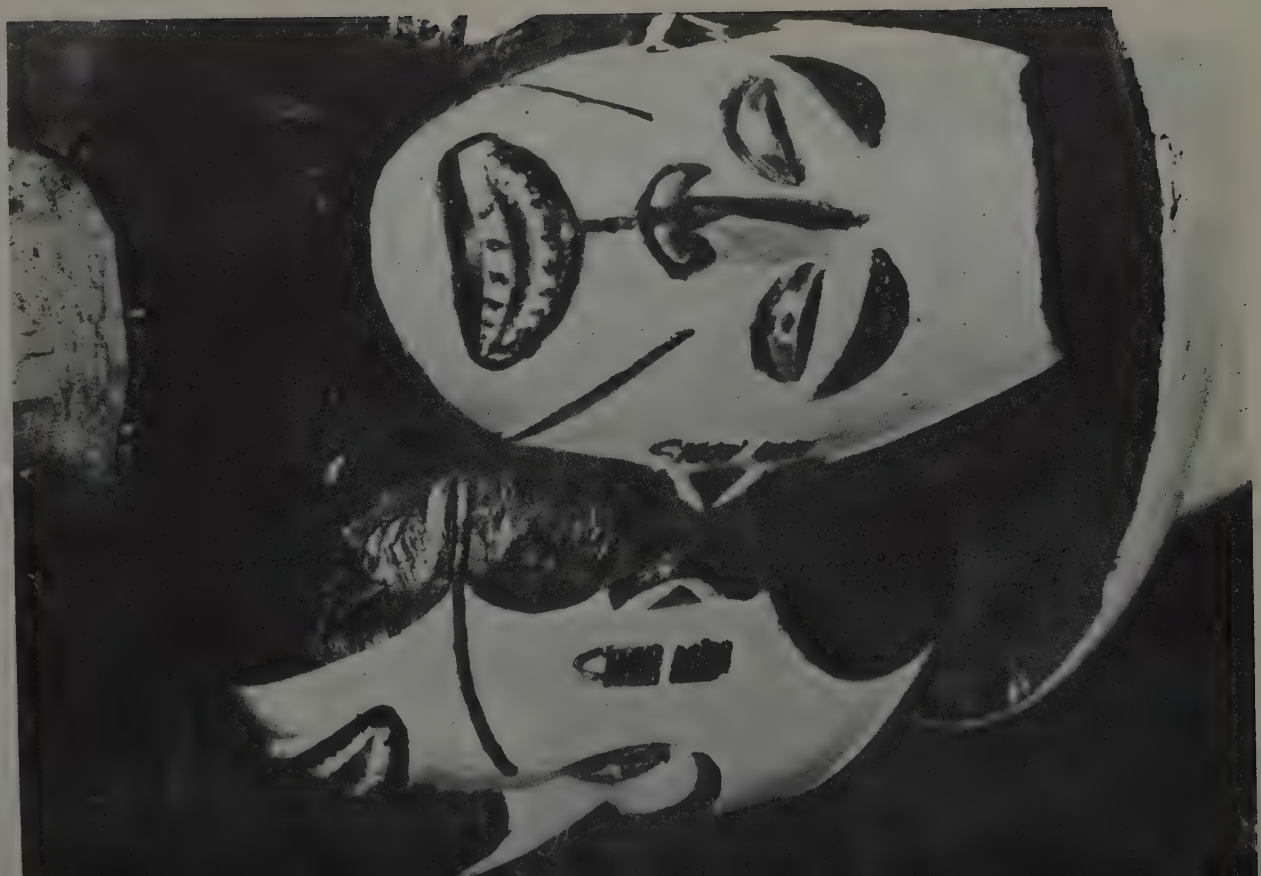
The *Ibo* on the other hand were the super democrats of West Africa. Unwilling to recognise that any man should be placed higher than another, they refused to evolve an elaborate chieftaincy hierarchy like the Yoruba. They refused to relate their every day life to history as the Yorubas did. Their form of government was fluid, and dynamic but failed to produce large organised states.

The Yoruba, on the other hand, with more permanent institutions created an empire that at one time may have contained more than five million people.

THE POSITION OF WOMEN

Just as Ibo government takes on rather more dramatic forms than Yoruba Government, so the position of women vis-avis men is far dramatic in Ibo society.

Yoruba society knows little conflict between the sexes. Women hold extremely high positions in all religious societies (including the male cults like Oro and Egungun) and they have good political representation. The woman chief (Iyalode) is an influential person in most Yoruba towns. In the past they were even allowed to sit on the throne, history cites examples of female obas from Ife, Ara Moko, Ondo, Dassa Zoume and other towns. Like most women in West Africa Yoruba women are economically independent. They pay lip service to the superiority or seniority of men, but this means little in practice.



II (left) Ibo mask from Nike.
III (top) Yoruba carving from Ilobu.

IV (opposite page) Ibo horseman (Nike)
Va (left) Yoruba horseman (Iddo Oshun).
Vb (top) Yoruba horseman on an Ifa bowl.

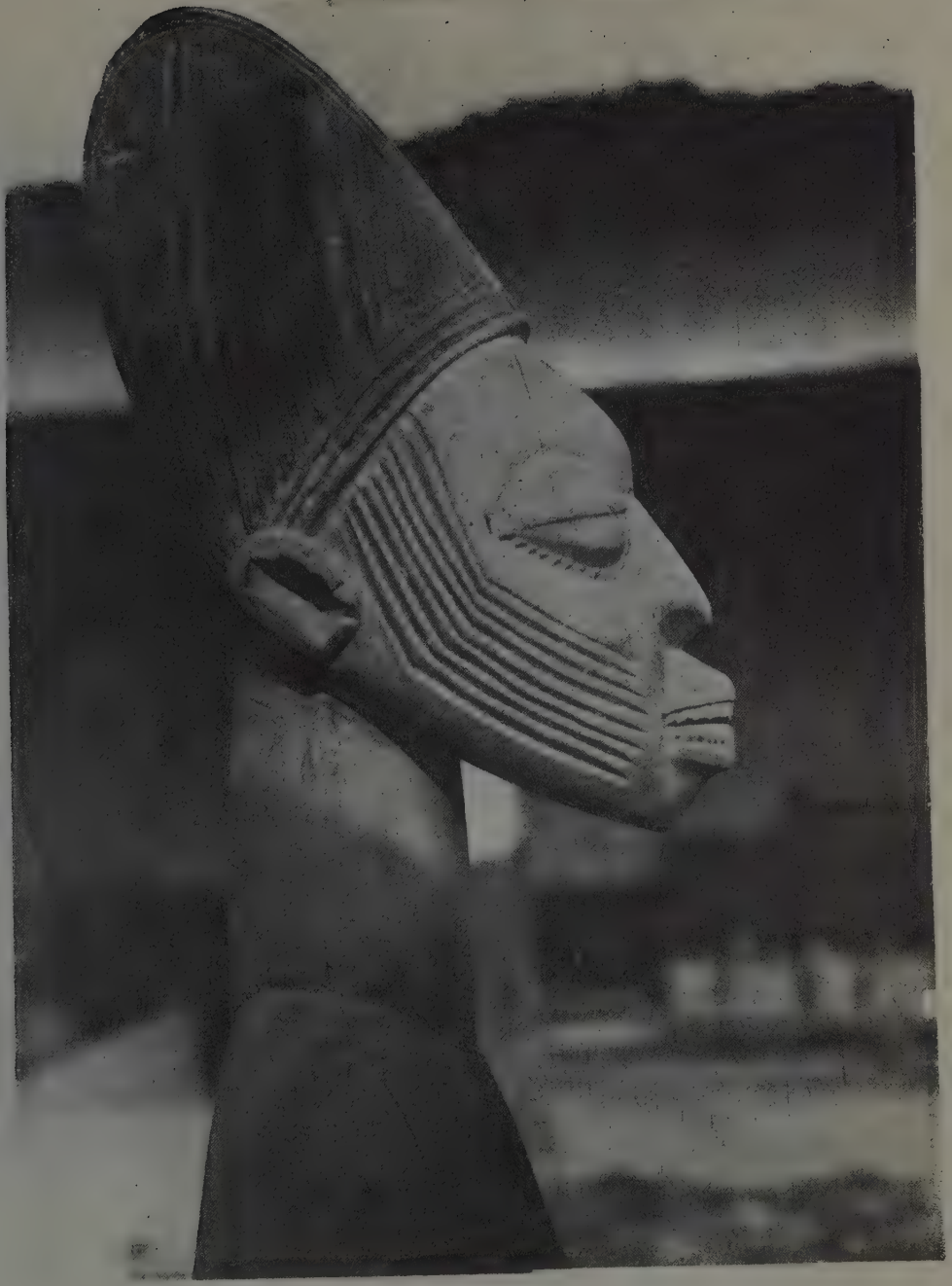


Plate VI Ibo mud sculpture (Owerri) showing facial marks.

Plate VII Yoruba carving (Ede) showing facial marks.

Plate VIII Ibo mud shrine (Mbari house near Owerri) showing body painting.

BOOK REVIEWS

NO LONGER AT EASE by Chinua Achebe. Heinemann, London, 1960. 13s. 6d.

Chinua Achebe's second novel has been expected with anxiety. His first novel had undoubtedly created a considerable impression. But most people asked themselves: will he be able to do it again? Was it merely the unusual fascination of the subject matter that was so attractive in "Things Fall Apart?" Will the author be equally convincing when he deals with contemporary Nigerian life?

My own fears have certainly been allayed. For "No Longer At Ease" is certainly a worthy successor to the first novel.

The subject matter is in itself much less dramatic and much less exciting than that of "Things Fall Apart". It is the common story of the bright young student who is sent to England by the "Progressive Union" of his native village. On his return he finds that he no longer understands the people who brought the great sacrifice for him. He also discovers that his magnificent senior service salary does not carry him very far: he has to pay back the loan of the Umofia Progressive Union, support his parents, pay school fees for younger brothers and keep up the standard of living expected of him. He tries to revolt against an age old custom by marrying a girl whose ancestors were "osu", sacrosanct slaves devoted to the service of a god. But he finds that even his best friends and his most enlightened compatriots oppose him. He is soon disillusioned about his new, glamorous life. He succumbs to despair and corruption.

Obi Okonkwo, the hero of this novel is not an unusual type. We all know dozens like him. He is not as unforgettable a character as his grandfather the warrior Okonkwo, the hero of "Things Fall Apart". But then this new novel is about the new Nigerian middle class, and like most bourgoisies in the world the Nigerian one does not produce particularly colourful and memorable characters.

The strength of the novel does not lie in its characterisation but in its brilliant description and analysis of situations and conflicts. The characters are nearly all *types*. The narrow minded, mission trained father. The hard working, self sacrificing mother. The ceremonious president of the progressive Union. The smooth young politician. We have known them all.

But the interest of the novel lies in its realistic and humorous description of typical situations. The pompous meeting of the Improvement Society, the clash between the young African civil servant and his expatriate boss, the hero's growing attachment to Clara, the nurse, inspite of the fact that he believes "love" is an overrated European invention, the awkward meeting between father and son after his return from England, all these scenes strike one as extremely authentic.

In all these involved situations the author is not out to distribute blame, to accuse or exonerate. He has sympathy for all his characters, but above all he is out to *understand*, to *analyse* and to *define* their behaviour.

Chinua Achebe has a gift for summing up people and relationships poignantly in a couple of sentences. Thus he says, for example of Mr. Green the hero's boss in the civil service:

"Here was a man who did not believe in a country and yet worked so hard for it. Did he simply believe in Duty as a logical necessity?"

Again he sums up the attitude of the hero's father — one of the first Christians in Umuofia— to his warrior grandfather Okonkwo:

"It was odd that he should have rejected everything about his father except this one proverb. Perhaps he had long forgotten that his father often used it."

As in his first novel, Achebe delights us with his clever use of Ibo proverbs. Proverbs can easily become boring, but Mr. Achebe always uses them in such a way as to throw new light on a situation or on people's thoughts and motives and the story is greatly enriched by them.

Equally delightful is his occasional use of colourful Nigerian English as a means of characterisation. This superb opening of a prayer may serve as an example here:

"Oh God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob, The beginning and the end. Without you we can do nothing.
The great river is not big enough for you to wash your hands in.
You have the yam and you have the knife; we cannot eat unless you cut us a piece. We are like ants in your sight. We are like little children who only wash their stomach leaving their back dry...."

A third quality that helps to make this novel a success is Mr. Achebe's ironical humour. As soon as we get too deeply involved in his realistic descriptions of contemporary Nigerian life, he forces us to shift our position with a single poignant remark that places us outside the situation and makes us laugh with the author.

In one respect the new novel is superior to the first. In "Things Fall Apart" one had occasionally the feeling that here was a Nigerian *explaining* his way of life to Europeans. In "No Longer At Ease" Mr. Achebe has freed himself from that completely. Looking at Nigerian life Mr. Achebe seems to feel like his hero Obi Okonkwo when he watched his village during a festival:

"Let them (the Europeans) come and see men and women and children who knew how to live, whose joy of life had not yet been killed by those who claimed to teach other nations how to live."

Mr. Achebe has gained a new confidence. He presents Nigerian life as it is — no need to justify it or explain it. "No Longer At Ease" is a phrase that may well be applied to Obi Okonkwo the hero of the novel — it certainly would not fit Chinua Achebe, the confident young author.

Omidiji Aragbabalu.

SOUTH AFRICAN STORIES edited by David Wright, Faber and Faber, 1960. 16s.

"South African Stories" edited by David Wright, contains seventeen stories each from a different author. Nadine Gordimer, Doris Lessing, Alan Paton, William Plomer and Olive Schreiner are already famous and some of the others deserve to be. The book is about white South Africa and does not elucidate or engage in the black-white conflict which to many of us, is the beginning and end of our knowledge of South Africa.

If we feel for one side of the South African phenomenon, let us at least try to fathom the other side, which monstrous culprit though it may be, cannot by the nature of human life be the absolute pit of wickedness we are wont to see.

"South Africa is a land where, by the accidents of history and the operation of human turpitude, peoples and communities are sharply divided and tend to live side by side rather than together", says David Wright in his introduction, "The South African of English descent thinks in one way, the Afrikaner in another, and the African native differently from either." Admittedly, it seems a pity that no black or coloured writer is included in this collection — and there could have been — but I think it should be accepted for what it is, a representative selection of good writing aimed successfully at filling some gaps in our knowledge of white South Africa.

Of the authors already mentioned, the stories are respectively typical. Nadine Gordimer's sophisticated, cynical, perhaps a phase of her own life; Doris Lessing's eloquent, ably descriptive, sharp and none too kindly. Alan Paton's "The Divided House" is humane, recognising pathos and defeat, but not hopelessness, in human dealings and aware too of the rigidity of the Establishment. William Plomer's story, the longest in the book, could to advantage have been expanded into a full-length story. Olive Schreiner's "The Hunter" is the delightful fable from her book "Story of an African Farm" of the hunter who devotes his life to the search for the bird called Truth.

Of the lesser known, Daphne Rooke's "The Friends" is an exquisite little fragment; there are three Afrikaner stories by Herman Bosman, Perceval Gibbon and J. Van Melle which illustrate very clearly the toughness, the narrow Calvinism and insensitivity which have earned Afrikaners their current reputation.

Uys Krige's "Death of a Zulu" takes place in the desert in the 1939-45 war and the only story with a setting outside South Africa. "A Quiet

Woman" by Bertha Goudvis is a bitter little tale of village tittle-tattle; S.G. Millin writes with pace and humour, Ronald Byron and Jack Cope would, like William Plomer, have proved more satisfying if their stories had been full-length novels. A short story cannot successfully be a condensed novel but requires the stamina to stand alone and complete; its function is to embody a significant episode or idea or crystalise a realisation.

In this respect Dan Jacobson and Pauline Smith prove themselves successful in the art. But more, their two stories are outstanding in this anthology for their quality of honesty, depth of feeling and clarity of vision. Their perception of real people and the warmth of their compassion elevate them beyond the level of ability of the average writer.

Dan Jacobson's mature observation on an angry encounter between a Jewish and an Afrikaner family is a summary of the futile degradation of racial tension: "So a sort of peace did come, and we got back into the car. No one shook hands with anyone, there had been no reconciliation to warrant that. But no blows had been struck, and no one had called anyone a bloody Dutchman or a bloody Jew, so everything was as well as could be expected. Better really, for us, because we still despised them. We despised that family: it is not our fault they misinterpreted it. And they should have known that we were as frightened of them as they were of us. We left them there, outside their white-washed shop with the house behind it, that looked across the sand road to the railway line and the railway paddock where one chestnut horse was growing thin in transit between two lost farms."

"The Pain" by Pauline Smith, is about a devoted old couple whose separation when the wife goes to hospital causes them both pain greater and more unbearable than her illness. "When morning came it was not the pain in Deltje's side that made life a mystery to the old couple. It was the pain in both their hearts." The story is told with such wonderful delicacy and sympathy that when the old man steals Deltje away from the hospital to take her far away home, our relief is as great as their own.

The quality of gentleness of these two writers, Dan Jacobson and Pauline Smith, shared only by Alan Paton and Daphne Rooke, is quite noticeably lacking in the rest of the book and reflective it would seem, of the real South Africa, divided, fearing and hating as it is. But there is a high literary standard throughout the anthology, it is informative and we shall be the poorer for ignoring it.

Remi Jones.

THE AUTUMN EQUINOX by John Hearne. Faber & Faber 1959.

This novel is set on the imaginary Caribbean island of Cayuna and played against the background of Fidel Castro's Cuban revolution. Jim Diver, an American who sympathises with the rebels, has been sent to the neutral, English speaking island, to print the rebel's newspaper "La Libertad". He has been given a helper, another American, Peter Conroy, who is however not interested in the revolution and accepts this as just another job.

Nicholas Stacey, an old merchant, allows Diver to use his storeroom, in order to set up the secret printing press. He too is no sympathiser with the rebels but obliges a friend of his youth, who has since become involved with Castro and who asked him to help Diver. Stacey's young, vigorous niece Eleanor falls in love with Diver, much to the dismay of her uncle, who thinks Diver is too unstable a character to be a good choice for Eleanor.

This, in brief outline, is the human situation which the author sets out to explore. For the book is not really about Castro's revolution. The book is about four people thrown together by circumstances and the tense, exciting relationships that develop between them. The revolution is only important in the novel because the different attitudes of the four people towards it complicate their relationships.

Diver is the idealist. He needs the revolution in order to have a purpose in life:

I had become suddenly responsible. Responsible for something, and responsible to others and a cause. I was really joined, now, with others, most of whom I had never seen and whom I would never see, but whom I could love and honour for their suffering and for the purpose we shared.

To Jim Diver the revolution is a psychological necessity. He needs a purpose to give stability to his life. His companion Peter Conroy is cynical about it all:

Then in Havanna some old guy with big dark eyes and silver hair got talking to me at a party this other guy had taken me to. And here I am. He said he'd pay if I would do this job and it seemed like a good kick at the time, and besides I don't want to write and ask my lousy father for any more dough before winter

The old man Nicholas Stacey disbelieves in the revolution. Experience has taught him that little of real value is achieved by violence:

Surely he must have learnt by now how ephemeral is the life of what passes for justice which such revolutions achieve. A change of governors is all that happens; no change of government. A brief, intoxicating weekend in which those who have fought for truth and liberal catchwords use up their honesty, and then the take-over bid by the realists.

For the girl, Eleanor, the revolution is merely something that steps between her and the man she loves. She feels this for the first time when the printing press arrives:

But as I looked at the press that Monday before going up to eat, I knew Jim and I had acquired a bit of drab luggage. It was something I should have to learn to think of as important because it was so important to Jim. I went over and touched a sort of wheel thing attached to frame by straps; it was stiff and creaky. For a moment as I looked at it squatting there like some dreary animal, I hated it for being so stiff, ugly and important.

In the brief period of four months, which the book describes, the four characters go through tense emotional experiences, from which all emerge changed except Nicholas Stacey, the old man, who remains unmoved in his detached wisdom.

The plot of the novel is an inner rather than an outer plot. Few things happen except for the subtle changes of human attitudes and relationships. John Hearne builds up his climax in a tight and compact construction.

The form is interesting, because the novel is told in the first person, but the narration alternates between Eleanor, Diver and Stacey. Thus there is a constant change of angle, of tone and of mood which makes the novel unusually vivid.

Sangodare Akanji.

AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES

R.B. le Page and David de Camp.
JAMAICAN CREOLE (Creole Language Studies 1 Edited by R.B. le Page) Macmillan 30s

Students of Afro-American linguistic problems will give a warm welcome to this, the first of a new series of creole language studies.

Jamaican Creole is divided into two parts: (1) "An historical introduction to Jamaican creole," by Dr. le Page and (2) "Four Jamaican Creole texts with introduction, phonemic transcriptions and glosses" by Dr. De Camp.

Dr. le Page rejects the possibility of any real linguistic continuity between Spanish and British times. In his chapters on the British settlers, buccaneers and European immigration since the seventeenth century he refutes the frequent assertion that the white settlers were predominantly of Scottish descent. His contention is supported by the fact that Scotticisms in the phonology and lexicon of the modern dialect are rarer than features common to Jamaican Creole and the dialects of Western England and Ireland.

Jamaican Creole had its genesis in a pidginized form of English which was the medium of communication between the white masters and the African slaves. When the resultant pidgin (no-man's-language) became someone's mother tongue a Creole language was born.

Dr. le Page shows that a broader creole developed in Jamaica than in Barbados because in the former island the proportion of black people to white was much greater. Barbados had a large white indentured population in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In passing we may note that there are no Creole vernaculars extant in the Spanish West Indies (Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico), where the proportion of settlers of European to those of African stock was always high. It is, however, probable that African influence may be present to a greaters or lesser degree in the vocabulary, and phonology of all languages spoken on the shores of the Caribbean.

Slaves were brought to Jamaica from many parts of Africa, including, it seems, Madagascar.

Dr. le Page makes a careful examination of the documents which might help to establish the origins of the slave population in a chapter which will be essential reading for all students of West African history during the period of the slave trade and for those who study the negro in the New World. He is, like his predecessors, hampered by the lack of surviving records kept by private traders and monopoly holders, but he has collected in one place a valuable series of tables on the deliveries of slaves to Jamaica between 1673 and 1808. He prints a useful map of the slave-trade coasts of West Africa and of the early Maroon settlements of Jamaica, founded by runaway slaves before and after the British conquest of the island.

The leaders of the Maroons seem to have been of the Cromantin (Cormantine, Kromantyn, Kromantee, etc.) nation and Kromanti talk amongst the Maroons, like other varieties of Jamaican Creole, contains many Twi loan-words. Jamaican planters preferred to import slaves from the Gold Coast, and although these must have been of diverse origins it is possible that many spoke related languages. At least forty Twi loan-words are still in common use in Jamaica and the day-names of Ashanti, though now become nicknames, generally pejorative, are still widely used. *Cuffee*, *Quaco*, *Kwami*, *Quashie* and *Cudjoe* are names which would not sound unfamiliar to-day in Ghana.

A chapter on the Maroons is of great interest and will complement the study of the Krio (creole) language of Sierra Leone promised for a later number of "Creole Language Studies."

Dr. le Page also discusses the possible effects on the dialect of emigrant labourers returning from Panama, Cuba and England.

He sums up the language situation in Jamaica in these words.

"Since speech patterns vary so sharply according to the social context, and there are in addition quite noticeable regional variations in the broadcast dialect, it is an over-simplification to speak of 'the Jamaican dialect.' In attempting a comprehensive description, the number of alternate forms which one would have to give as 'free variants' would be considerable for any one speaker. Jamaican society being in an even greater state of flux than English society, Jamaican Creole is even more of a myth than Standard English, but like Standard English it is a necessary and convenient myth. In describing it one is describing the main characteristics which individual idiolects share over a broad band at one end of the spectrum, and one can indicate the order in which these characteristics shade off into others or are retained throughout the spectrum."

Dr. le Page does not think that we are justified in regarding Jamaican Creole "as structurally related to West African languages except in the case of specific idioms. The West African influence is most certain in some aspects of the phonemic pattern, in the levelling of stress, and in some lexical items; it is probable in speech-cadences, but these remain for investigation by a trained Africanist."

Elsewhere Dr. le Page refers to the use of a Portuguese trade language on the Gold Coast and the adaptation of a number of Portuguese words in the Gold Coast languages, West African pidgin and the Creole languages of the West Indies. How far the West Indian Creole languages themselves are genetically related to the Portuguese trade language has yet to be determined and the issue has been avoided, perhaps wisely, by Dr. le Page.

The second part of this book is completed by Dr. David de Camp's study of four Jamaican creole texts prepared from tape recordings of stories told by Emmanuel Rowe, an old Maroon from Accompong.

Rowe's pronunciation is analysed in detail and is considered to be typical of the broader varieties of Jamaican dialect. This analysis includes a complete phonemic description and notes on stress and intonation which differ markedly from RP and American English. It also contains an all too short grammar.

As a sample of typical broad Jamaican, here is a short passage taken from one of the stories and followed by a word-for-word translation done by Dr. de Camp.

'nou, a 'uol 'taim a 'nansi-in 'stuori, we 'gwain, at 'nou. 'nou 'wants 'der 'waz, a uol 'wich 'liedi 'liv, had 'wan 'son, 'niem av 'wilyam. 'wilyam 'wor in'giej, tu a 'yon 'liedi, 'fram a 'neks uol 'wich 'sekshan 'huu waz 'har 'madar in 'laa. nou

'dat 'gyol 'fada, had 'dat 'gyol wid iz 'fos 'waif. an 'afta di 'waif di 'siis, hii iz 'mari a neks 'wuman, 'wich is a uol 'wich an 'dat 'wuman 'bier 'tuu 'daataz bi'saidz. 'nou di 'trii 'sistaz 'livin 'gud, 'bot di 'mada in 'laa 'didn 'laik dat 'wan 'daata a'tal, fi-di 'man. him pre'far fi-ar 'tuu. 'bot, 'yet di 'trii 'gyol wor 'juobial wid 'wan a'nada, wel 'dat 'wan gyol. 'frenz wid 'dis yon 'man, 'niem av 'wilyam, 'wilyam 'mada iz a 'uold 'wich. di 'gyol 'madaan'laa iz a 'uold 'wich. 'suo, yu gwain 'fain 'out, 'wa de go 'hapm 'nou.

'Now a old-time Anancying story we going at now. (Some Jamaicans call all tales Anancy stories, even those in which Anancy, the Ashanti spider-hero, does not appear.) Now once there was a old witch-lady live, had one son, name of William. William were engage to a young lady from a new (another) old witch's section who was her mother-in-law (stepmother). Now that girl's father had that girl with his first wife. And after the wife decease, he is marry a next (another) woman, which is a old witch. And that woman bear two daughters besides. Now the three sisters living good (got along well together), but the mother-in-law didn't like that one daughter at all, the man's. She prefer her own two. But yet the three girls were jovial with one another. Well, that one girl was friends with this young man, name of William. William's mother is a old witch. The girl's mother-in-law is a old witch. So you going to find out what is going to happen now.'

This is the first of a new series "which is to be published occasionally and at irregular intervals." The second volume will contain articles based on communications read at the First Conference on Creole Language Studies, held in Jamaica in April, 1959. The numbers which are to follow give promise of great interest: *Jamaica Talk* by Prof. F. G. Cassidy; a dictionary of Jamaican English on historical principles: a Jamaican grammar by Dr. Beryl Loftman Bailey and a phonology by Miss V. L. McLoskey.

R. W. THOMPSON

INDONESIAN POETRY:

"SIRIH UND ROTE HIBISKUSBLUTEN" by W. A. Braasem and Janheinz Jahn. Published by Albert Langen, Georg Muller, Munchen.

Janheinz Jahn is extremely well known as a translator of poetry into German. His fame is largely based on his work on contemporary African poetry, but he has translated many other things, for example Andalusion love songs from the Arabic. Here now is a new volume of lyrical poems from Indonesia. This was produced in collaboration with W. A. Braasem, a famous scholar of Indonesian languages, who has studied this literature for many years. The result is a most attractive volume of poems in rhythmic flowing German, which one cannot help reading through at a sitting.

The poems, which are all part of the ancient traditions of the Indonesian islands, make an interesting comparison with the oral poetry of West Africa.

In West African poetry we find a certain vigour, great freshness of imagery, and a subtle sense of humour. It is a realistic poetry, that has few illusions about human nature, and that impresses one with the wisdom of its comments on life.

Indonesian poetry, by comparison is romantic. A great many of them are love poems, which are extremely delicate and tender. But human relations and emotions are always idealised:

> However long the road, I shall go with you.
> However bad the weather, I shall carry you through it,
> You may hold on,
> To my loosened hair.

Compare with this the down to earth Yoruba verse:

> Love is of many kinds.
> One love says: if you die, let me die with you.
> Another love says: if you buy the soup, I will buy the yam.

The imagery too of Indonesian poetry is very different. It is full of flowers, colours, and scents none of which are very prominent in West African poetry. Its total effect is rich, luscious like an overripe fruit. It is an extremely visual poetry, and anything the Indonesian poet touches, even the most common sight is magically transformed into something rich and strange. Here is a description of a table laid with food, from the poem "The Feast":

> The rice lies on the plates well arranged.
> The grains are lined up like ants on the margin
> They are lumped together like clouds in the centre.
> The large dishes stand around like chiefs,
> Surrounded by their retainers
> The coffee cups form a chain
> Like princesses stepping out of their bath
> Plates and dishes are adorned with golden letters.

Perhaps the most beautiful and sensitive poems in this volume are to be found in the section on death. The following example which I am printing in full is one of the finest visions in the

book :

He followed the clouds,
Ran after the mists.
Settled down as dust.
And became a citizen
In the village of his parents,
A neighbour of his ancestors.

When he passes
He singes the grass,
Berries drop off,
The wells are empty,
When he passes,
The pool of the buffaloes dries up.

He is withdrawn from sight,
There in the land of the South,
He is invisible,
Like the creator of the seasons.

We are mourning.
He followed the clouds,
He ran after the mists,
And he reached the hem of the sky.

U.B.

A DANCE OF THE FOREST
a play by Wole Soyinka

A new play by Wole Soyinka has become something like a literary event in Nigeria, which young intellectuals eagerly look forward to. After "The Lion and The Jewel" and "The Swamp Dwellers" (see review in BO 6) we have recently had a student's performance of the lighthearted satire "Brother Jethro". But undoubtedly Soyinka's most important play is his ambitious "Dance of the Forest", specially written for Nigerian Independence. The play recently won the "ENCOUNTER" drama competition for Nigerians.

The present review is written before the play has actually been produced on the stage. But it seems important to draw attention to it as soon as possible. A fuller discussion of the production and performance will follow later.

"The Dance of the Forest" is not an easy play to read. Soyinka indulges in a lot of symbolism and the play is almost as obscure as the second part of Faust. The reader is not helped by the fact that many of the characters are taken from Yoruba traditional mythology : for Soyinka attaches completely new meanings and values to well known figures like *Ogun* or the *Abiku* and sometimes invents new composite creatures like *Esuoro* (a combination of Eshu and Oro ?)

The play deals basically with a young nation's relationship to its past. The unnamed community of the play is preparing for a great ceremony "the gathering of the tribes" (independence). For this occasion they are trying to invite some of their illustrious dead. They feel that to be able to believe in a glorious past will enable them to believe in an equally glorious future.

With the help of Murete the tree imp they succeed to conjure up a dead man and woman. But when the dead appear, the people are horrified. They are immediately disillusioned when they are actually able to confront their past and they try to forget and bury it. But this is not so easy — because once conjured the dead refuse to go. They now want to play their part in the affairs of the living and to complete their own uncompleted task from their previous lives. *Disillusionment with the past does not mean that one can get rid of it.*

The people must go through with the business of facing their past. Forest Head, a father figure among the gods has granted them their earlier wish of actually witnessing a certain moment in their remote past. In the second part of the play we are transferred to the court of *Mata Karibu* a medieval emperor and tyrant — and the past appears to the present generation more terrible than glorious. But they must realise that in yet another sense they cannot escape from the past. The living watch themselves in their previous lives at Mata Karibu's court (Soyinka makes use of the ancient African idea of reincarnation) and they must realise that over the centuries little has changed in their own private lives. They still find themselves involved in the same situations, fighting the same battles, bearing the same guilt. The pattern of their lives repeats itself: it is far more difficult to break with the past than it seems.

In the final part of the play the dead woman produces her unborn child. She wants to complete her frustrated purpose of life and put the child into the world, rather belatedly. There is a magical dance scene in which strange creatures of the forest and of phantasy appear. In the midst of this Ogun and Esuoro fight for the "Half-child." Ogun, in this play, is the protector god of courage and creativeness. Esuoro represents the destructive powers. Esuoro wants the half child to live. Because the half child is an *Abiku* a child that is born with the desire for death in its soul. Abiku in Yoruba mythology is the child that decides its own death. In Soyinka's play it symbolises man's incomprehensible fascination for causing extinction in his own image.

Ogun finally gets hold of the child and hands it over to *Demoke* his protegee. Demoke is a

sculptor. He is the protagonist among the human group of characters. Being the only *creative* person he is the only one worthy of redemption and he is the centre of the struggle between Ogun and Esuoro. Demoke hesitates a while with the Half-child in his arms. Finally he goes and returns it to his mother.

Demoke rejects this interference from the past. He is realistic enough not to believe the glorious old days. Yet as an artist he knows that he cannot fully escape tradition. (At the opening of the play we find him creating a "totem pole" for the gathering of the tribes.)

Demoke returns the Half-Child to its mother, because he does not wish to live under the compulsion of old ideas perpetually reborn.

It is for Demoke that the vision of a new life is opened in the end.

I cannot be sure that this interpretation of the play corresponds in detail to that of the playwright. I believe, however, that the "Dance of the Forest" is more than a mere allegory, in which a key is provided for every single character and event. These are not every day events maskerading in the fancy dress of Yoruba mythology. This play is true symbolism, and like all real symbols can inspire more than one interpretation.

Ulli Beier.

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Contributions to the first issue by: O. S. Coker, M. Babajumo, A. Faleti, Oba Laoye, Timi Ede; A. Odelana A. Odukoya, S. O. Iloyi, and S. B. Faturoti

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is of Swedish origin, married to a Nigerian. They are temporarily living in the United States. "Tales of Nmeka" are not translations of African poetry but poems inspired by Africa.

MAX PINCHINAT

a painter and poet from Haiti now living in Paris. These poems were translated from "Poemes Hountos" 1954. A new collection: "Poemes Mambas" is to appear shortly.

PAUL VESEY

an American negro whose poems first appeared in "Ivory Tusks", a bilingual volume published in Germany, with translations by Janheinz Jahn. Seven of his poems have already appeared in B.O. 4.

THE ARTISTS:

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lives in Zaria where her husband teaches painting at the Nigerian College. These linocuts where inspired by a trip to the South of Nigeria.

DEMAS NWOKO

is a student in his final year at the Nigerian College, Zaria. (See art plates between pages 10 and 11). He is at present working on the decor for Wole Soyinka's play "A Dance of the Forest".

COVER designed by Susanne Wenger after a Yoruba door.